

**Trauma, Modernity and Hauntings:
The Legacy of Japanese Colonialism in Contemporary South Korean
Cinema**

Submitted by Jake Bevan to the University of Exeter
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Abstract

In recent years, South Korean filmmakers have repeatedly drawn upon the nation's experience of Japanese colonialism as an element in the construction of their films. This thesis examines the multiple ways in which contemporary South Korean cinema has drawn upon this period in the nation's history, through both direct representation, and allegory and evocation. I demonstrate how new perspectives have emerged, creating a space to construct more nuanced considerations of the colonial period beyond nationalist paradigms, whilst not shying away from the traumatic elements which had heretofore defined the dominant perceptions of the era. Utilising trauma theory as a key framework, I argue that by restaging the traumatic events of the past on-screen, filmmakers have provided an opportunity for audiences to come to terms with this past. Turning towards the Korean concept of *han*, which addresses the accumulation of negative affect and how these negative emotions can be purged through the expression of *han*, I explore how the folk song Arirang has been mobilised as a way of connecting a film to this legacy of sorrow. By invoking the feeling of *han* in their work, South Korean filmmakers have tied their personal concerns to a wider national sentiment. I then draw upon the notion of spectrality, and the depiction of ghosts in contemporary films, in order to demonstrate the ways in which the present is haunted by the unaddressed actions of the past. Finally, I argue that a series of films featuring amnesiac protagonists serve to allegorise the 'settling the past' movement, which saw the establishment of a number of 'truth councils' tasked with investigating aspects of the nation's twentieth century history. Ultimately, this thesis argues that it is only by addressing and coming to terms with the traumatic elements of our past that we can ever hope to be rid of their negative influence.

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Introduction

Did genetic experimentation conducted by the Japanese cause a mutated strain of giant and aggressive boars to be set loose upon the Korean countryside? This is the suggestion presented in *Chaw* (Shin Jung-won, 2009), a parody of the monster-movie genre, in which an oversized descendant of these Japanese created 'test-boars' decimates a small South Korean mountain village. This explanation of monstrous genesis is perfectly fitting given the generic heritage of Shin's monster movie, but it also manages to be indicative of a far wider tendency in contemporary South Korean cinema; namely the locating of the source of contemporary horrors in the national past, and in particular in the nation's experience of Japanese colonialism.

The aim of this project is to investigate these cinematic evocations of South Korea's colonial legacy. Looking at a selection of films produced within the South Korean film industry since the year 2000, my goal is to unpick the ways in which the colonial period has been repeatedly invoked by contemporary filmmakers, and how, in doing so, they have both drawn upon, and contributed to, the meaning that this historical period holds within a collective cultural memory. The year 2000 serves as an appropriate starting point, not only due to the neatness of a millennial demarcation, but also because of the ways in which the South Korean film industry was transforming at this point in its history. Given that this thesis has an inherent interest in the impact of history, I am aware that these films do not stand in isolation, and therefore my analysis will occasionally include texts which were produced before this time period, but whose influence can be clearly felt within these contemporary films. Similarly, although my area of investigation is South Korean cinema, the transnational nature of

contemporary media production and reception means that the texts under discussion within this thesis, while part of a local cinema industry that engages with its own national culture in a myriad of ways, are also engaged with a wider, global, cinematic culture. The gradual dissolution of the significance of the national cinema model which has occurred within Film Studies, towards approaches with a greater awareness of the transnational flows which infuse every element of film, from its production through to distribution and reception, has changed the way in which we theorise the idea of a 'national cinema', meaning that the term 'South Korean Cinema' is now one which requires a degree of clarification.¹ In respect to defining the national identity of a film I have deferred to the Korean Film Council (KOFIC), whose regular reports and summaries of the domestic industry confer such an identity upon a production. Each of the films under primary consideration in this thesis are considered to be South Korean by KOFIC, are produced by primarily Korean talent and grant primacy to the Korean language.

The other issue that comes to the fore with any discussion of 'Korean' culture or cinema is the continuing division of the Korean Peninsula into two opposed nation states. Whilst both of these modern nations experienced Japanese colonialism as a single, unified entity, their post-colonial division has ensured that their response to this period in their shared history has been, likewise, divided. The *ju'che* ideology pursued by the successive leaders of the Kim family has resulted in the culture and the citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea being largely absent from the global flows mentioned above. Therefore, the issue of availability means that this thesis will be limited to discussing South Korean cinematic responses to the period of Japanese occupation. Any reference in the text to Korea in the period of

national division, should, unless stated otherwise, be understood to refer to the Republic of Korea.

Why Colonialism?

Why conduct research on the ways in which contemporary South Korean cinema engages with the nation's colonial past? That this research is being conducted in pursuance of a degree in Film Studies ensures that cinema is inevitably a primary concern and assumes that the study of the cinematic form is of value, but why South Korea, and why focus upon this specific instance of its history?

In the Twenty First Century, South Korean cinema exists as a rare example of an industry that is both able to resist the global dominance of films from the United States within its own domestic market (for example, in 2017, the last complete year at the time of writing, Korean films made up 51.8 percent of the local box office)² as well as find a measure of success within regional and wider global markets. Alongside television dramas and popular music, South Korean cinema has become a cultural medium with international reach as part of the 'Korean Wave', a term that has emerged to encapsulate the increasing global popularity of South Korean cultural products. South Korean films regularly appear at the most prestigious of international film festivals, frequently receive both cinematic and home-media distribution in a variety of different markets and have, in the past few years, become reliable constituents of the catalogues of global streaming VOD providers. Some of the factors which have enabled South Korean cinema to achieve such a level of success and be able to take such a sizeable role in global film culture will be discussed later in this introduction.

Believing then that South Korean cinema is of sufficient size, artistic, and technical merit to warrant study, why should Korea's experience of colonialism be of relevance over seventy years since it ended? I argue that while the peninsula is no longer under Japanese control, the relevance of this period to contemporary society is visible in, amongst other ways, its repeatedly contested recurrence in three areas of discourse within South Korea; the political, the academic, and the cinematic. I will turn to the latter two of these arenas in the following pages, illustrating how historians have demonstrated a renewed interest in interrogating the colonial period, and how filmmakers have drawn upon this historical era as a setting for a diverse array of narratives. In respect of the political arena, to fully chart the multiple ways in which the colonial period continues to affect diplomatic relationships between South Korea and Japan would be an undertaking far larger than the following thesis. Instead, I present here three indicative examples of moments from within the time period of this study in which the relationship between Japan and Korea has been strained by a colonial legacy that is far from settled. These incidents have had an impact upon the diplomatic relationship between two significant global economic powers. A greater appreciation of how each party looks back upon this moment of their shared history, coupled with an awareness of specific incidents which trigger animosity and lead to such strained relations, is a vital step in understanding the political dynamics of the region. The following study is but one approach that contributes to this far wider endeavour.

The Yasukuni Shrine, located in Tokyo, is a Shinto shrine that commemorates those who died in service of the Japanese Emperor in war, over a time period that includes the years in which Korea was a Japanese colony. Amongst those whose spirits are enshrined there, according to Shinto belief,

are fourteen 'Class A' war criminals found guilty by the tribunals which followed Japan's defeat at the end of the Second World War. During his time in office (2001 – 2006), Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi paid annual visits to the shrine, a move which frequently increased tensions between Japan and its Asian neighbours, including Korea, who view the move as glorifying Japan's militarist past.³ Responding to a visit to the shrine in 2017 by a number of Japanese politicians and an offering sent by the Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, South Korea's foreign minister issued a statement declaring that "We [The South Korean Government] express our deep concerns that responsible leaders of Japan's government and parliament are again paying tribute at the Yasukuni Shrine and visiting the shrine that glorifies the history of the war of aggression".⁴

In 2001 the publication of a history textbook for Japanese students by a nationalist group, the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform provoked strongly negative reactions within South Korea. Anger over historical revisionism covered a variety of different historical periods, with the Japanese textbooks 'deemed guilty of "disparaging"... Korean history with a view to "embellishing"... Japan's own history and placing the blame for colonisation on others, in this case Korea'.⁵ One key issue that drew attention in South Korea was the way in which the textbook erased any mention of the comfort women (a topic which will recur regularly throughout this thesis), an issue that has become 'one of the main symbols of Japanese aggression in Korea'.⁶ In April 2001, the South Korean government 'issued a protest statement' to 'prevent Japan's distortion of history'. Following this statement, the government 'recalled its ambassador to Japan... and publicly raised the responsibility of the Japanese

government for the distorted history textbooks at the United Nations' Human Rights Commission in Geneva'.⁷

On the 14th of December 2011, a crowd gathered outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul to protest what they perceive as Japan's failure to properly acknowledge and apologise for taking Korean women and forcing them into sexual slavery in the Japanese military during the final years of the colonial period. This gathering was the thousandth such protest, one having taken place every week for nearly twenty years.⁸

What these examples serve to demonstrate is that the colonial period, and the sense that Japan has not atoned for its actions during this period, still has the ability to inspire a strong reaction from some sections of the South Korean public and their political representatives. Korean history is however littered with such incidents; ones which continue to have resonance and provoke strong reactions to this day. The Korean War and the ensuing division of the peninsula, the Gwangju Massacre, and the Sewol Ferry disaster are just three examples of incidents from Korea's recent history which would, I suggest, reward similarly in-depth scrutiny. My selection of the colonial period as an object of enquiry is not intended to diminish the importance of these, or any other historical events, to contemporary South Korean society. A study of the cinematic representations of the colonial period will illuminate just one of the many ways in which South Korea relates to its past, and hopefully future work by other researchers will address other such important historical junctures. The depiction of national division in South Korean cinema is a topic that has already received considerable attention, (I myself have written about it elsewhere⁹), and is discussed later in this introduction. At the time of this project's inception, there were too few films produced within the time period I am concerned with on the

topic of Gwangju to warrant a study of this length. The Sewol disaster occurred whilst this project was underway, and like the myriad of horrific incidents that preceded it in South Korea's history, we should not be surprised to see its influence upon filmmakers manifest in the following years. Contemporary South Korean cinema's response to its colonial period, I argue in this thesis, serves as a useful case study to explore how this medium provides a cultural outlet through which a society may engage with traumatic incidents in its history.

Korea's Colonial Experience

Given that this thesis is concerned with the ways in which contemporary South Korean filmmakers have responded to the colonial period of the nation's history, it is worth providing an overview of what exactly this history entailed. Korea's experience of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries serves in many ways as a microcosm for the global transformations underway at this time. From an age of empires and colonisation, through a period of warfare, both hot and cold, into (in the South at least), an age of hyper-modern capitalism, Korea has repeatedly experienced fundamental, transformative shocks in its modern history. As I will discuss shortly, this history has become a hotly contested ideological battleground, which each nation state, and factions within these states, have fought over to establish legitimacy for their differing visions of the peninsula's future. Whilst the establishment of an historical consensus is a task beset by the tides of contemporary geopolitics, filmmakers are producing works in response to the dominant historical narrative present in their time. Whilst the following overview of this history is far from exhaustive, it serves as an indication of the key topics, themes, and incidents referenced by contemporary films when they attempt to depict the colonial period.

The Path to Colonisation

Japan's increasing interest in the Korean peninsula can be traced back to the late 1800s, a time in which, following on from its own period of modernisation and having experienced unfair treatment at the hands of imperial powers, Japan sought to expand its international influence and territorial control. Despite the comparatively brief period of Korea's colonial occupation, thirty-five years from 1910-1945, the immediately pre-colonial period cannot be easily separated from the years of the Japanese occupation, and many of the events of this era resonate from the colonial period to the contemporary era. In 1875, a Japanese warship entered waters 'known to be off-limits to foreign ships' where it was fired upon by Korean cannons. The warship silenced these guns with a barrage of artillery, and a few months later Japanese troops landed on the Korean island of Ganghwa.¹⁰ A treaty ensued, which opened up Korea to international trade, with further negotiations establishing a Japanese consul in Seoul.¹¹ The following decades saw a gradual expansion of foreign influence in Korea, with not just Japan, but China, Russia and the Western powers all becoming involved in Korea's initial steps towards modernity.¹² Japan's engagement in Korea would become increasingly forceful by the close of the century. The Japanese supported an attempted *coup d'état* in 1884, and it was Japanese citizens who assassinated Queen Min, the wife of Korea's King Gojong, in 1895.¹³

Japan's increasing ambitions towards regional expansion were signalled by war with China in 1894. The treaty which declared Japan's victory served to formally establish the 'independence and autonomy' of Korea from China, and ceded Formosa (Taiwan) to Japan, establishing the country's first overseas

colony. The shift in the regional power dynamics of East Asia symbolised by the first Sino-Japanese war lead to the Korean King Gojong reconsidering his position, and in particular his title. As Han Woo-keun explains, the word *king* in the Chinese language signified a ruler subordinate to the Chinese Emperor, whereas the title given to the Japanese Emperor made him linguistically the equal of the Chinese ruler.¹⁴ Thus in August 1897, King Gojong declared himself Emperor Gojong, and the country's name was changed from *Choson* to *Taehan Cheguk*, the Korean empire.¹⁵ In February 1904, war broke out again, this time between Japan and Russia, another foreign power that had exerted significant influence over the Korean Peninsula. Korea declared neutrality, but Japanese forces were quick to occupy Seoul. The Treaty of Portsmouth which concluded the war between Russia and Japan, included statements in which Russia 'officially conceded Japanese political, military and economic interests in Korea'.¹⁶ Having previously struck deals with both Britain and the United States granting them a free hand in Korea, there was now no longer any international force left to oppose the Japanese designs in Korea.

On the 17th of November 1905, a treaty between Japan and Korea was signed that declared the latter nation a protectorate of the Japanese empire. Historians sympathetic to the Korean position are quick to portray the signing of this agreement as aggressively forced upon the Korean nation.¹⁷ The Protectorate Treaty established the office of the Resident-General in Seoul, and Itō Hirobumi became its first inhabitant. The Resident-General assumed control over all of the nation's foreign affairs, and Korea lost the right to make treaties without Japanese assistance.¹⁸ In June of 1907, Emperor Gojong sent secret emissaries to the Second World Peace Conference being held in The Hague to 'disclose the sufferings of Korea under Japan' and to try to place international

pressure upon Japan.¹⁹ Their mission was a failure. The emissaries were not permitted entry to the conference as Korea had no rights to diplomatic representation.²⁰ As a result of these actions, the Japanese forced Emperor Gojong to abdicate, allowing the Resident-General to become the principal ruling authority in Korea.²¹ An agreement signed shortly in the wake of Gojong's abdication placed all internal and foreign affairs directly into the hands of the Resident-General, and Japanese citizens were made eligible for all official Korean positions.²² Japan now took to establishing control over all remaining Korean institutions. The first of these to fall was the Korean army, which found itself unceremoniously disbanded in August 1907.²³ Within the next few years, the Resident-General assumed control over administering justice, the prison system and the police.²⁴ Finally, in August 1910, the treaty annexing Korea to Japan was signed and Korea came under absolute Japanese control. The Japanese renamed their new territory Chōsen. Korea now ceased to exist as an independent state.

Colonial Ideology

A defining feature of Japanese colonial policy was its declared intent to assimilate the Korean populace into the national body, over time turning them into Japanese citizens. In principle, the policy would lead to Korean and Japanese people becoming 'members of equal standing in an extended nation-state', and thus colonial practice in many ways resembled that of nation building due to its endeavours to disseminate 'a common culture and political systems among the state's constituents'.²⁵ In Korea this process was multi-faceted, and would eventually result in attempts to enforce the use of the Japanese language, obeisance at Shinto shrines and the adoption of Japanese names

amongst colonial subjects on the cultural level, with moves to standardise the justice, educational and democratic systems across both the colony and the homeland on the political level.

Japan's control of Taiwan made it the first non-white colonial power of the modern era. The question of race was, as Leo T. S. Ching states, 'a fundamental element' in the Japanese colonial ideology.²⁶ This manifested itself both through claims to a shared racial heritage between the coloniser and the colonial people, but also in rhetoric which described colonial expansion as protecting the Asian peoples from Western imperialism. Discourse of assimilation needs to be understood on very specific terms: Japanese policy was never based upon an idea of hybridity. As the title of Ching's book, *Becoming Japanese*, implies, Japanese colonial doctrine sought not to create a new nation combining the cultures of two different people, but for the colonised to adopt the identity of the coloniser: to *become* Japanese. The importance of this distinction is the hierarchical relationship it constructs between Japanese and Korean cultures. The intent was to supplant Korean culture with its Japanese equivalent, rather than to produce a hybridised colonial subject who articulated both Japanese and Korean culture. The policy adheres to what Mark Caprio sees as the ideology of 'peripheral colonial' administrations, which define the colonised 'as the object to be changed: as inferior peoples they had to be prepared for their acceptance as national subjects'.²⁷ This highlights a number of intriguing discrepancies. Firstly, as Ching explains, the definition of both the coloniser and the colonised as *Japanese*

'conceals the inequality between the "natural" Japanese whose political and economic privileges as citizens... are guaranteed, and those "naturalised" Japanese, whose cultural identities as

Japanese... are required, but whose political and economic rights as citizens are continuously denied'.²⁸

Discrimination between 'natural' and 'naturalised' Japanese was a common feature of the colonial era, but what Ching's own description conceals however is that becoming a 'naturalised' Japanese citizen is not an automatic privilege bestowed upon those in the colonial peripheries in the same way that the rights of the 'natural' Japanese are guaranteed by their ties to the home islands. To become naturalised required the adoption of the colonial power's culture.

Even this acknowledgement of the differences between 'natural' and 'naturalised' subjects, as a more nuanced way of understanding national identity under Japanese rule, beyond the rigid binaries of 'Japanese' or 'Korean' identity, is insufficient. Again, as Ching explains, the 'underlying assumption of this argument' (that the colonial subjects could become Japanese) 'is that cultural and ethnic identities... simply existed as exclusive, transhistorical, and differentiable categories'.²⁹ Just as I intend to demonstrate that we need to think of Korea's colonial period not as a monolithic block of history, but one which was marked by myriad shifts and transitions, so must we see the colonial subject. Beyond accepting that the colonised population was made up of individuals who each responded in their own way to occupation, we must acknowledge that the subject positions adopted by these colonial subjects were subject to transformations and modification over the course of the colonial era. Rather than the rather simplistic boundaries of conflicting national identities, it is better to consider identity as a spectrum, one on which the loosely defined concepts of 'Koreanness' and 'Japaneseness' lie at each extreme, but always out of reach. Instead all Japanese Imperial citizens negotiated this spectrum, on a daily basis. It is transitions such as these, and the nuances of identity in a

colonial state, that become among the most interesting features of the films I analyse in this study, and a key feature of this thesis' second chapter.

Military Rule and the March 1st Movement

Korea's colonial period can be viewed as comprising three differing phases of Japanese administration. As Brudnoy argues, these 'should not be seen as reflections of radically different *ideological* policies, but rather as reflections of differing responses to changing conditions'.³⁰ The 'selective emphasis' of many accounts of the colonial period upon the years between occupation and 1919 and the wartime years of 1937-1945, times during which state violence was at its height, has done much to obscure the wider variances and modifications made to the administrative policy which dictated the living conditions of Koreans upon the peninsula.³¹ The first of these phases is widely referred to as the period of 'Military Rule'. As the name suggests, this period was deeply authoritarian and saw an intense military presence on the peninsula. By 1915, two divisions of Japanese troops were stationed in Korea, many of whom were located in the northern provinces to combat insurgent groups acting from within Siberia and Manchuria.³² The Japanese military also assumed control of Korean civilian policing, as well as operating independently as military police. The entire country therefore lay under the direct control of the Japanese army.³³ The publication of Korean language newspapers was prohibited, Japanese papers critical of government policy were kept out of Korea, and by the end of 1910, each city was permitted to have only one newspaper, which was published in Japanese.³⁴ Censorship was not merely limited to contemporary material however. In November 1910, the police searched bookstores and private homes for books on Korean history and geography that might 'rouse

Korean national spirit'.³⁵ As a result, between two and three hundred thousand books were confiscated and burnt.³⁶ In order to create 'an atmosphere of terror', the Japanese had their civil officials, including classroom teachers, wear swords.³⁷ Thus the widespread feeling during this period amongst Koreans was that their 'national pride and culture was destined for eradication'.³⁸ According to a British observer at the time, Japanese policy aimed 'at depriving the Koreans [sic] of even their own language and customs, and their total assimilation by Japan', and it was their 'deliberate attempt to enforce this policy by every available means' which caused them to be regarded with 'universal hatred' across the land.³⁹ This hatred manifested itself when, in 1919, led by a group of Korean intellectuals, a widespread rebellion against the Japanese rose up across the country, forcing the Japanese into re-assessing their approach to the governance of the peninsula.

The March 1st movement, also known as the *Manse* or *Sam'il* movement, proved to be the largest consolidated rebellion against the Japanese occupation of the colonial period.⁴⁰ When the former Emperor Gojong died in January 1919, rumours circulated that he had been poisoned by the Japanese.⁴¹ The demonstration was scheduled for the 3rd March, the date of his funeral, but was later put forward to the 1st.⁴² On this date the declaration of Korean independence was read out to an assembled crowd who had gathered at Pagoda Park in Seoul.⁴³ The crowd proceeded to march through the streets, waving the forbidden Korean taeguk flag, a symbol of Korean nationalism.⁴⁴ The demonstrations soon swept across the rest of the Korean peninsula. Estimates of the number of active participants in the movements range from the high figures of over two million quoted by Park and the Korean Broadcasting system to as low as the five hundred thousand people estimated by Hatada to

have engaged in the protests.⁴⁵ Despite the primarily non-violent nature of the protests, the Japanese suppression in the following months has been described as 'brutal and thorough'.⁴⁶ Indicative of this response are the multiple reports of Japanese police and soldiers having fired into the unarmed crowds.⁴⁷ In April a law was put into place defining anyone taking part in the demonstrations as criminal, and subsequent incidents were met with a policy of massacre.⁴⁸ Exact figures are unknown, but Richard Devine cites Japanese sources in saying that 46,948 demonstrators were arrested, 7,509 killed and 15,961 were wounded.⁴⁹

The Years of Cultural Rule

The March 1st movement necessitated a modification to Japanese administrative policy on the peninsula, a transition from the period of 'Military Rule' to what is known as the phase of 'Cultural Rule'. Han argues that the net effect of these changes was 'not to make oppression less intense but to make it more subtle'.⁵⁰ While it is debatable the extent to which the era of 'Cultural Rule' demonstrated a change in overall Japanese attitudes toward the colony and its inhabitants, the period certainly stands as one in which the population had greater levels of freedom than in either the preceding or subsequent phases of colonial administration.

The first round of changes sought to abolish the visual distinctions between the occupier and the colonised, as well as to reduce the visibility, if not the extent, of the Japanese military's control of Korea. Firstly, the requirement that government officials were to wear uniforms, including their attached sabres, was lifted.⁵¹ Legislation was changed allowing for the appointment of a civilian to the post of Governor-General, although at no point in the colonial period did this occur. Finally, the military police were replaced by civilian officers, although

often it was merely a case of the same person assuming new uniforms and titles.⁵² While most of these measures did very little beyond giving the impression of a more relaxed administration, the period saw changes which influenced the day-to-day life of the occupied Koreans in a number of ways. Perhaps the most significant of these was the relaxation of the restrictions surrounding the Korean language. In 1920, three Korean newspapers came into being, spreading not only news and information on Korean culture, but also the language itself.⁵³ This is not to pretend that Korean writers were given free reign during the period. All publications were subject to Japanese censorship, and newspapers were frequently subjected to suspensions of publication or seizure of editions felt to be transmitting anti-Japanese sentiment.⁵⁴

As colonial doctrine subtly changed, educators, not the police or the soldiers, became the new enforcers of colonial power on the peninsula. To the Japanese administration, education was a mechanism for 'discipline, social order and improved economic efficiency'.⁵⁵ Educational policy in Korea was shaped not only to mould the colonised into willing imperial subjects, but also to counteract and 'deliberately dismantle' the independence movement.⁵⁶ The greater freedoms granted to the colonial subject in the 1920s suggested that the Japanese realised that an endeavour of such scope as assimilation would take generations to achieve, and that slow coercion would achieve results that the forceful suppression of the previous decade had failed to. Younger generations presented a new opportunity for the Japanese apparatus to imprint a certain subservience on its colonial subjects. The importance of Korea as a territorial foothold on the Asian mainland increased due to further Japanese expansion in the 1930s. On the 18th September 1931, a small explosion nearby to a Japanese owned railway served as a pretext for the Japanese invasion of

Manchuria. The incident was revealed as having been fabricated by the Japanese military, and while troops allegedly were present only in an endeavour to restore law and order, the Japanese declared Manchuria an independent state under the name of Manchukuo in March 1932.⁵⁷ Once control had been taken of Manchuria, the Japanese moved to introduce policies in their new territory much the same as they had in Korea, moulding the justice and educational systems to better serve Japanese imperial design.⁵⁸ Korea now achieved a new purpose, serving as the bridge between the Japanese home islands and its new Asian conquest.

The Years of *Naisen Ittai*

As Korea became more and more vital to the expansion of the Japanese Empire into Asia, steps were taken to more efficiently make use of its resources, whether they be industrial, agricultural or personal. The period from the late 1930s is often described as the period of wartime mobilisation, in which the Governor-General aggressively pushed forward with the policy of *Naisen Ittai* (meaning Japan-Korea one body).⁵⁹ Of importance to this project are two of the key features of how colonial Korean assimilation was accelerated; the increased Japanisation of the Korean people (and the corresponding attempts to shatter their ties to their traditional Korean culture) and the ways in which this population was mobilised for military purposes.

The previous philosophy, which had permitted Korean culture to persist in the belief that doing so would open the eyes of the Korean people to the merits of Japanese culture, was cast aside for the belief that Koreans could not be expected to assimilate while still allowed access to remnants of their own culture.⁶⁰ The most prominent symbol of Korean culture was language, and this

period saw the Japanese do all that was possible to eradicate it. Korean language newspapers, which had already seen frequent censorship of articles, suppression of issues and arrests of reporters, were finally forced to shut down in 1940.⁶¹ In 1942 the last two literary magazines in Korea disappeared.⁶² The early 1940s also saw modifications to the colonial education system. The Japanese and Korean education systems were merged, a move which made Korean now an elective class, rather than compulsory. By 1943 all Korean language classes had been phased out.⁶³ Pupils were forbidden to speak in Korean, even outside of school.⁶⁴ From the mid 1920s the Government-General had been lowering the incentives for the Japanese to study Korean, eliminating this allocation entirely in 1940.⁶⁵ Korean language radio broadcasts had been increasingly pushed off the air by Japanese-language programming since 1937, and were completely stopped by 1944.⁶⁶ As these developments show, the erasure of the Korean language from the peninsula was a gradual progress, slowly suppressing each individual outlet for Korean culture, as opposed to a sudden, outright, blanket-ban. This period must therefore have seen large numbers of the Korean people developing a certain level of fluidity in regard to language, being able to negotiate both Korean and Japanese language media, in ratios that would shift significantly over the course of a decade, before being forced to operate solely in the Japanese language.

It is not just the linguistic aspects of Japanese culture that were impressed upon the nation's colonial subjects. Efforts were made to persuade the Koreans to replace their Western calendars with the Japanese system, based upon Japanese Imperial reigns.⁶⁷ In October 1937 the 'Oath of Imperial Japanese subjects' was drawn up, and each morning students declared their loyalty and service to the Japanese Emperor.⁶⁸ Days were set-aside once a

month as 'patriotic days' for Koreans to assemble under the Japanese flag to listen to speeches and recite pledges to the Emperor.⁶⁹ Shinto, a religion which declared the divine providence of the Emperor had been a part of colonial life since its inception, but was substantially escalated in this period. Shinto later became a significant component in many of the rituals through which Koreans demonstrated loyalty to the Japanese Empire, including the aforementioned 'patriotic days'. The Japanese would use the increasing numbers of Koreans attending Shinto shrines as proof that assimilation was beginning to take hold in the colony.⁷⁰

One of the most striking elements of the Japanese attempts to assimilate the Korean people, and one that is most virulently remembered in contemporary Korea is the issue of Japanese names. On the 10th November 1939, then Governor-General Minami 'invited' the Korean people to adopt Japanese names in place of their own.⁷¹ Hatada describes this 'invitation' as the Koreans being 'forcibly encouraged' to adopt Japanese names and completely discard their traditional family names. He claims that by September 1940, sixteen million people, that is 80 percent of the total population had done so.⁷² Where Caprio, a scholar more sympathetic to Japanese actions in Korea than most others, recites without question the official position that the 'gift' of the Japanese surname system was a way of commemorating the 2600th anniversary of the founding of Japan and overcoming the 'inconvenient' system that had previously dominated⁷³, Lone and McCormack present a more inspired grasp of the motivation behind this move. As they point out, in Confucianist societies, 'a cardinal tenet is respect for one's ancestors', which includes the perpetuation of the family name. 'In striking at the very core of the social and ethical makeup of Koreans, Minami's [the Governor-General who issued the "invitation" to the

Korean people to adopt Japanese names] intention was to break their personal historical line and force them to start again from a metaphorical year zero'.⁷⁴

When coupled with the concurrent modifications to the system of family registrations enforced by the Japanese, this more insidious motivation becomes highlighted. Ancestral records were to be cast off as incomplete or inaccurate, and new family records, in which the Korean people would be listed with Japanese names, would take their place, further fracturing any sense of independent Korean history.

The increased attempts by the authorities to mould the colonial people into dutiful servants of the Emperor in the final years of the occupation went hand in hand with an expedited militarisation of both the Korean peninsula and its inhabitants. While the Japanese had primarily viewed Korea as 'an agricultural resource' in the first few decades of the colonial period, with the coming of war to Asia the time had come to put Korea to more strategic use.⁷⁵ Two ideological slogans in circulation at this time, "Chōsen [the Japanese name for the Korean colony] as a base of penetration" on the continent, and "Chōsen as a base of war supplies" indicate this escalation of Japanese interest in the peninsula as a strategic resource.⁷⁶ These slogans highlight that it is the geographical location of the colony, and its proximity to regions targeted for Japanese colonial expansion, that was important for those in the colonial administration. The peninsula served as a foothold from which the Japanese could expand their territorial influence. And while the natural resources and infrastructure of the peninsula were vital for Japanese ambitions on the Asian mainland, the Japanese administration was abundantly aware of the potential for the colonial populace to become the peninsula's most promising resource.

Chung Hye-Kyung classes the colonial mobilisation of Koreans into three key categories, labour mobilisation, military mobilisation and sexual mobilisation, each of which passed through a number of phases.⁷⁷ From September 1939, Koreans were 'collectively relocated' in order to meet the needs of the Japanese industry and the war effort.⁷⁸ By the end of 1943, approximately 400,00 people had been relocated to Japan, and by the end of the colonial period approximately 422,000 people had been relocated within Korea at the state level and over four-million people at the provincial level.⁷⁹ The sexual mobilisation of Korean women during the final years of the Japanese occupation is a highly controversial issue, and one upon which I do not wish to dwell at any great length in this section but shall return to within the context of analyses across the ensuing chapters. At this point it should suffice to note that towards the end of the colonial period, 'somewhere between 100,000 and 200,000' Korean women were forced into sexual slavery for the Japanese army. These women would come to be known as the 'comfort women'.⁸⁰

As the military situation moved from incident, to crisis, to warfare, discussions frequently started referring to Koreans in regard to their value as resources.⁸¹ On the 22nd of February 1938 the government-general passed an ordinance allowing Koreans to volunteer for the Japanese Army.⁸² While 15,000 Koreans volunteered in the first two years, with another 800,000 volunteering in the following three, only 17,500 were actually inducted into the army.⁸³ The discrepancy between the number of volunteers and those accepted raises some intriguing questions. Firstly, it implies that these volunteers could not be the result simply of Japanese coercion, as their number clearly outstrips the demand, and instead suggests that there was a significant section of the

colonial population who ardently desired to become full imperial subjects.

Secondly, the discrepancy highlights the fact that there was a selection process involved in military enlistment and suggests that a large number of this volunteer group were either not to the sufficient physical standard, or proficient enough with the Japanese language to the level expected by the Japanese forces. This demonstrates that despite having dominated the peninsula for more than a generation, the Japanese had been unable to educate or train the populace to a level comparable to that on the Japanese mainland. Finally, this disparity in figures may point to a wider aspect of Japanese prejudice. That while a gesture such as permitting military volunteering serves powerful propaganda purposes, in practice the Japanese command was still unwilling to recognise the Korean recruits as equally legitimate members of the wider empire. This hypothesis calls to the fore an often-overlooked aspect of the colonial period: that while most histories focus upon the forcible imprinting of Japanese identity onto unwilling Korean subjects, towards the end of the colonial period there would have been a significant section of the population who had never known anything besides the occupation, who accepted the imperialist rhetoric, and even those whose desire to become Japanese exceeded the Japanese desire to permit them. This is a theme I will return to at the close of this thesis' second chapter.

With the entry of the United States into the Second World War following the Japanese attack upon Pearl Harbour, the war in the Pacific escalated. Japanese resources, including personnel, were soon being drained and revisions to Korean military service were necessitated. On May 9th 1942, the government-general announced that beginning in December 1944, Korean men would be conscripted into the Japanese army.⁸⁴ Brandon Palmer attributes this

thirty-month delay between announcement and implementation as an attempt by the Japanese to prepare Koreans for the draft ideologically, educationally, and administratively.⁸⁵ Once again this points to the failure of the policy of *naisen ittai*. Military participation was rushed due to the turning tide of the war, meaning that Korean recruits were regularly not up to the Japanese language standard required. While the period of cultural rule to the late 1930s can be viewed as a gradual progression towards, but still far from reaching, full assimilation, the last few years of the colonial era saw the master-plan disintegrate into a series of stop-gap measures.

Conscription commenced as scheduled towards the end of 1944. In the 9 months until the end of the war, 110,000 Korean conscripts would serve in the Japanese armed forces.⁸⁶ The atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki on the 6th and 9th of August 1945 devastated those two cities and claimed the lives of 'at least ten thousand' Koreans amongst the numbers of Japanese killed.⁸⁷ On the 15th of August 1945, the Japanese Emperor Hirohito addressed the world in a radio broadcast that declared Japanese surrender, ending the Second World War and thirty-five years of Japanese control of Korea. Over the next month the formal agreement of surrender was signed and Japanese soldiers on the peninsula gave way to Americans. Korea's liberation had come not from its own actions, but at the hands of external powers.

This necessarily brief overview of Korea's colonial experience should serve to illustrate a few key points. Firstly, the colonial period cannot be considered as a unified block of historical events but is instead characterised by the shifts and vacillations of Japanese imperial doctrine. This doctrine explicitly sought to transform Korean colonial citizens into Japanese subjects, but in a manner which required the complete eradication of Korean culture, and which

never addressed systemic discrepancies between the treatment of Japanese and Korean subjects. Finally, it should be readily apparent that the act of writing history can never be truly objective, and that any resulting work is influenced not only by the author's interpretation of historical events but also by issues such as their decision of which events to include, down to the selection of terminology utilised. It is this situation that leads E.H. Carr to state that history is the 'process of interaction between the historian and his facts' in which the individual historian is also a 'product of history and of society'.⁸⁸ Historians of East Asia emerge from a context in which viewpoints of the colonial era are highly polemicised, and successive nationalist governments in all states concerned have heightened their rhetoric in relation to the period as part of the process of nation building.

Writing in 1970, David Brudnoy illustrates three significant difficulties faced in studying this period. Firstly, 'much of the source material is propagandistic', and is useful for reflecting attitudes, but far less so for providing factual evidence. Secondly, antagonisms between the Japanese and Koreans are still keenly felt and Japanese scholars have been reluctant to deal with the period so soon after the event. Finally, Korean historians, 'embittered by decades of Japanese occupation' have been 'less than strenuous about producing *scholarly* studies of the occupation years'.⁸⁹ Although this article is closer in time to the years of the occupation than it is to the present day, his analysis has been echoed by contemporary authors.⁹⁰

When considering colonial Korea, the reader of history is confronted not only by a difference in viewpoints between scholars from the colonising nation and those from the colonised, but also by wildly differing ideological perspectives emerging from those who belong to the formerly colonised nation.

As a result of the division of the Korean nation into the Communist Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the North and the Capitalist Republic of Korea in the South following liberation from Japan, both emerging countries took to reconstructing the narratives of the peninsula's past in an effort to legitimise their own status as the true representative government of the Korean people. As a result, Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson argue, many of the issues related to the colonial period have 'been obscured by the relentless politicisation of the historical record' since national division.⁹¹ In his own historical account of Korea (updated in 2005), Bruce Cummings declares that 'Japanese and Korean historians have shied away from writing about the period after 1910'.⁹² He explains that 'for Korean historians, the colonial period is both too painful and too saturated with resistance mythologies that cannot find verification in any archive', and that in South Korea, records of the decade between 1935-45 are often blank.⁹³ Cumings suggests that this lacuna is partly to do with the fact that many of the primary sources necessary to conduct historical research are still classified, claiming that 'closed archives are themselves symptomatic of deeper problems' and implying that this may be related to a legacy of Japanese collaborators wishing to act as if certain events never happened.⁹⁴ Emblematic of this are two historical records produced by South Korean researchers, both entitled 'The History Of Korea', which devote whole chapters to acts of Korean resistance to the occupation and atrocities allegedly committed in retaliation by the Japanese, yet contain barely a few pages concerning events which took place following the outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China in the 1930s.⁹⁵

In recent years however there has been a marked increase in the visibility of the colonial period in contemporary South Korean culture, as well as

a shift in the ways in which this period has been evoked. A resurgence of interest in the impact of East Asia's past upon its present geopolitical inter-relationships, coupled with changes in the governments of its constituent states has encouraged Asian scholars to turn their attention towards the Japanese empire. Kyu Hyun Kim claims that the coming of democracy to South Korea (in 1987) has freed scholars from the necessity to politicise their accounts and allowed for a more objective investigation of the legacy of the colonial period.⁹⁶ Despite this freer climate, and although there have been quite a phenomenal number of studies produced within the Korean language of the colonial period since democratisation, the vast majority of these fit within what Lee Horyong defines as the 'dual axes of "exploitation and resistance"', namely studies of Japan's colonial policies and the national liberation movements which sought to oppose them.⁹⁷ Emerging from within this trend however has been a growth in social histories, those concerned with recapturing the experiences of those who were subject to colonial rule; micro-histories that existed within the more widely analysed national movements. Ultimately, these new historical perspectives have finally led, in the last decade or so, to the production of analyses influenced by the 'post-discourses' that have swept through academia that endeavour to move beyond the nationalist paradigm.⁹⁸ Coinciding with this wider social movement has been the rediscovery of a number of films produced by Korean subjects under Japanese colonialism. Previously thought lost, the recovery of films from the 1930s and 40s amongst archives in China and Russia, and their subsequent reintroduction to a contemporary Korean populace, has served to highlight not only how film can exist as an historical document, but also a prominent avenue through which a nation addresses its own history.⁹⁹ It is into this context of renewed interest in the Colonial period

that the films under discussion in this thesis emerge. Concerned with elements of national importance, for example the lives of the Korean monarchy and the machinations of the Japanese imperial agents, they also seek to represent elements of the everyday lives of Korean colonial subjects. By embodying this history cinematically, these films emerge as another form of history writing, one which may sacrifice the historian's alleged prioritisation on factual accuracy in place of creating a visceral, emotional engagement with the nation's past. They are, as Kyoung-Lae Kang describes, reconsiderations of the colonial past, 'searching for what has been "unwritten" in official history'.¹⁰⁰ This thesis, in charting the evocation of the colonial period in contemporary South Korean cinema, is an attempt to explore this re-writing of national history. In addressing how portrayals of the colonial period express more nuanced understandings of the dynamics at play than the framework of 'exploitation and resistance' discussed above, I reveal a turning point, not only in how the colonial era is perceived, but also in how South Korean cinema addresses a collective history.

Korean Cinema

That contemporary South Korean filmmakers have been able to engage with this recurrence of interest in the colonial period in a meaningful way is due to the position that local films have assumed in the nation's cinematic culture. Although the domestic industry can trace its origins back to the period of Japanese colonialism, and has undergone a number of distinct phases and challenges since, it is in the new millennium that local filmmaking has become a dominant force. The origin of this 'New Korean Cinema', as it has come to be known in critical circles, is often traced to the release in February of 1999 of *Shiri* (directed by Kang Je-gyu), a watershed success that highlighted the

transformations made to the domestic industry that preceded it as much as it paved a new direction for local filmmakers. Understanding how the New Korean Cinema came to be is important not only for contextualising the films that this thesis studies, but also to understand the modes of address and cinematic forms that these works have adopted.

The Korean film industry, which had been pursuing new business models in the post-democratisation era that had seen the entry of the large national conglomerates (*chaebol*) into film production, was shaken by the financial crisis which swept Asia in the late 1990s.¹⁰¹ As Kyung Hyun Kim demonstrates, three factors resulting from the fallout of this financial crisis combined to produce a favourable environment for domestic film production. Firstly, due to the massive devaluation of the local currency, Hollywood films became exponentially more expensive for local distributors, thus creating something of a vacuum for local productions to fill. Secondly, the ensuing exit of the *chaebol* from film production allowed for the entry of venture capital firms to take their place. Their short-term returns approach to financial gain favoured a business model more suited to the production of Hollywood-style blockbusters. Finally, Kim suggests that the financial crisis engendered a surge of nationalist sentiment, which went some way to ensuring that screen quota systems, which regulated the percentage of time a cinema must devote to domestically produced products, was maintained, despite international pressure.¹⁰² Alongside these changes, there was also a shift at the legislative level, allowing filmmakers greater freedom to approach a wider variety of subjects. In 1996, the censorship practices which had inhibited the industry throughout its existence were dismantled, if not entirely demolished, by the Supreme Court's declaration that post-production cuts were deemed unconstitutional.¹⁰³ Although there are still instances of filmmakers

coming into conflict with regulators, in the new millennium there is the potential for previously taboo subjects to find cinematic articulation on the nation's screens.¹⁰⁴

Changes to the patterns of film consumption have also had a phenomenal impact on the viability of the domestic industry. The nation's first multiplex was opened in 1998, and the continued construction of cinemas meant an increase in screens from 497 in 1997, to over 1000 in 2002.¹⁰⁵ A blockbuster business model demands both a certain amount of market saturation and the potential for a huge number of people to be able to see a film in order for it to quickly recover its costs and to begin to return a profit. The fact that there is a distribution infrastructure that allows for 2016's biggest box office hit, *Train to Busan* (Yeon Sang-ho), to be showing on 1,788 screens within South Korea in the first week of its release highlights the dominance of this approach. *Shiri* was the first film to demonstrate that the blockbuster model's application in Korea might reap phenomenal rewards. While the film's opening on twenty-four (later increasing to thirty-five) screens in Seoul now seems laughably modest, the previous box-office record holder, *Seopyeonje* (Im Kwon-taek, 1993) had been released on just one screen and never screened on more than three screens simultaneously in the capital.¹⁰⁶ *Shiri* would go on to break the standing box-office record, and would sell more tickets than all Korean films combined in an average year throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.¹⁰⁷ Buoyed by a steady stream of record-breaking releases, South Korean cinema in the new millennium has become the dominant force at the domestic box office. Since breaking the 50 percent market share milestone in 2001, South Korean films have taken the majority of the box office for eleven of the past sixteen

years, dipping only as low as 42.1% in 2008, yet surging as high as 63.8% in 2006.¹⁰⁸

The success of *Shiri*, and the number of films which followed in its wake, establishing their own box-office records, has led to much discussion of the notion of the 'Korean Blockbuster'. As Chi-yun Shin and Julian Stringer have pointed out, the designation of 'blockbuster' is one with no readily agreed-upon definition and one whose meaning shifts depending upon usage.¹⁰⁹ Jinhee Choi defines her usage of the term as 'a production/marketing strategy characterised by the size of the production and scale of the distribution', but highlights the relativity of the term within the contexts of different industries as well as to different time periods within the same industry.¹¹⁰ In their efforts to chart the defining features of the 'Korean blockbuster' however, these authors find common ground in their discussion of the industry's use of local specificity as a way of 'de-westernising' the blockbuster. Choi describes the 'appeal to a shared sense of Korean history' as a way for local filmmakers to differentiate their work from Hollywood and other national cinemas, as well as a potentially lucrative marketing strategy.¹¹¹ It is striking that following *Shiri*, many of the blockbusters of the new millennium, such as *Joint Security Area* (Park Chan-wook, 2000), *Silmido* (Kang woo-suk, 2003) and *Taegukgi* (Kang Je-gyu, 2004), use the subject of national division as the impetus for their narratives.¹¹² Six of the top ten biggest South Korean box office successes to date have narratives which involve the restaging of significant incident's in the nation's past.¹¹³ In engaging with local history in such a way, Korean blockbusters have been drawn into the political arena, contributing, in the cases of the earlier films mentioned, to the debate regarding the nation's relationship with North Korea.¹¹⁴ This thesis is concerned with films which address, to greater or lesser extents, Korea's

experience of Japanese colonialism. As such, these films are a specific instance of this trend in New Korean Cinema to mine the nation's history as a source for locally specific cinematic narratives. By doing so, as Shin and Stringer illustrate, these films are engaged in shaping 'the public understanding of historical events in a media-saturated environment', informing perceptions of 'past, present, and ultimately future events'.¹¹⁵ Freed from the political censorship which restricted the extent to which the national past could be addressed on screen, and working in a vibrant and thriving cinematic industry, South Korean filmmakers have the opportunity to address the nation's colonial legacy, and reach audiences to extents that were previously unimaginable. While not all of the films discussed in this chapter aspire to the blockbuster model discussed here, they follow the suggestion that the inclusion of local specificity makes for a film more relevant to a domestic market, and which therefore may have greater appeal.

Korean Film Studies

Accompanying the resurgence of filmmaking in South Korea and its increasing international profile has been an explosion of English language academic enquiry into South Korean cinema. Books published on this subject include; overviews of the history of Cinema in South Korea, from its inception to the birth of the New Korean Cinema¹¹⁶, monographs and edited collections focused on the contemporary renaissance of South Korean cinema¹¹⁷, analyses of specific genres within South Korean cinema¹¹⁸, considerations of the work of specific individuals¹¹⁹, theory-led critical analyses¹²⁰, as well as an ever-accumulating number of journal articles. As well as work solely concerned with South Korean cinema, there has been a blossoming of research which situates the industry in

relation to wider regional contexts, for example, to Japan¹²¹, within East Asian Cinema more generally¹²², and as part of ‘the Korean wave’, a regional and increasingly global cultural flow that extends beyond cinema to comprise a wide variety of Korean cultural products.¹²³ Considered as a whole, this research has contributed to establishing South Korean cinema as a vibrant and vital area of academic enquiry. By contextualising the current success of the domestic industry, not as something that has occurred *ex-nihilo*, but as the latest manifestation of a national cinematic culture that has existed since the beginning of the 20th Century, academics have reintegrated South Korean cinema, and key Korean filmmakers, into a global cinematic history that is all-too-often dominated by Eurocentric and American biases. In exploring South Korean cinema as a cultural product that exists in an arena shaped by regional and global cultural flows, one in which cinema is but one of multiple products that feed upon and influence each other, many of the aforementioned texts work together to provide new models for how we might address film culture in an increasingly transnational and trans-medial world. This thesis continues this tradition. By casting my analysis on under-explored texts, and by considering themes fundamental to the construction of contemporary South Korean identity from a new perspective, I seek to strengthen this body of literature on South Korean cinema in its latest transformative stage. In particular, I am keen to look beyond the tendency to only consider direct representational practices, and explore how, through allusion, allegory, and evocation, South Korean filmmakers have utilised a globalised form and international influences to speak to a nationally specific concern.

The topic of national division, and South Korea’s still fractured relationship with its northern counterpart has been, as mentioned previously, a

recurrent topic for South Korean cinema, and likewise a source of much critical discussion. Whilst films which depict the colonial period have not received as much critical commentary as the more sizeable body of texts which discuss the conflict between the two Korean states, as more and more filmmakers have turned to this historical period for narrative inspiration, academic commentators have sought to address what this revival of historical interest means for contemporary society. One such example of this is an article by Baek Moonmin which surveys a handful of the colonial set films which I discuss in this thesis, in an attempt to categorise their male heroes into one of three roles¹²⁴. Baek draws parallels between the depictions of colonialism and national division, drawing upon the literature that has surrounded the latter. However, I would argue that her attempts to position these newer colonial films as exact continuations of tropes established in these previous texts does more to highlight their differences than their similarities. For example, her assertion that *My Way* (Kang Je-gyu, 2011) depicts both the Japanese and Korean characters as equally victimised, suffering due the West's refusal to relinquish power in an echo of the director's earlier film *Taegukgi*, falls apart when one considers the sheer amount of inter-Asian victimisation perpetrated in the film, or the surprisingly sympathetic way the text depicts the Third Reich.¹²⁵ Although the Japanese antagonist comes to be portrayed sympathetically by the film's dénouement, I would argue that this is less a reappraisal of attitudes towards Japanese colonialism in general, and more a depiction of how individuals and their relationships can be devastated by geopolitical currents far beyond their control, a theme which is also clearly expressed in both *Taegukgi* and *Shiri*. Despite this, Baek's final speculation, that the horror genre provides a space through which the colonised might appear as collaborators or even colonisers

themselves is something with which I heartily agree. This thesis' final chapters will turn to ostensibly horror texts in order to demonstrate how some of the more uncomfortable truths of the colonial period may be found outside the rubric of direct representation or address. Still sensitive issues, such as collaboration and the lack of a national decolonisation process in the aftermath of liberation, have had a profound impact upon South Korea's post-colonial identity. I argue that while these topics may not be fully addressed in films specifically depicting the colonial period, one may still see them addressed by contemporary filmmakers.

More perceptive analyses of this current tendency in South Korean filmmaking come from Mark Morris and Kyung Hyun Kim. Morris insightfully charts three different strategies that South Korean filmmakers have used to address the colonial past, namely melodramatic forgetting, exorcism and mimicry.¹²⁶ Aside from the useful observation that contemporary South Korean cinema is not a unified body of texts and instead addresses the national past in a multiplicity of ways, Morris also highlights how these different approaches can find filmmakers falling foul of different external pressures, for example the difficulties in marketing such a film to Japan (a key export market), nationalist backlash, or even domestic legal issues.¹²⁷ Kim meanwhile traces the trope of disability through two colonial and two post-colonial films, charting how the latter texts destabilise such boundaries as coloniser/colonised.¹²⁸ Although my research intersects with these texts only tangentially, their demonstration of the nuances which impact upon representations of the colonial period has been fundamental in shaping my own thinking.

Far closer to my own concerns is Cynthia Childs' discussion of Korean history films in the journal *Asian Cinema*.¹²⁹ Alongside a very relevant

discussion of how we might compare historical films with the traditional understanding of what constitutes historical work (more on which will follow shortly), Childs discusses three themes which will be key in this thesis' opening two chapters; modernity, colonialism and identity. Although Childs efficiently delineates a number of the key areas in which these films are doing interesting things, (including a fleeting reference to trauma), her analysis extends little beyond the surface features of these texts. Childs may, accurately, declare that these films 'all have something to say about how contemporary Korean filmmakers are re-imagining Koreans' role in their history' or that they 'clearly have interesting things to tell us about changes in the ways in which Koreans have been imagining their national identity', but she does little to explore exactly what 'interesting things' are being expressed. In chapter two, I specifically explore the ways in which the entire concept of national identity is questioned, and arguably dismantled, during an assimilationist colonial administration. I also raise the controversial suggestion, backed up by the films in question, that the roles that Koreans played in their own history were not limited to partisan patriots, but also included positions from which they abused and subjugated their colonised peers.

Although often discussing the same texts as these articles, it is my intent that this thesis expands upon the current literature on this topic in the following ways. Firstly, the nature of a doctoral thesis, in comparison to a journal article or book chapter, ensures that I am able to devote greater attention to the films that our analyses have in common, and have greater scope to discuss films which may, at first, seem ancillary. The extended time period over which this research was conducted has also allowed me to take into account films released more recently, many of which have had a fundamental bearing on the structure of this

thesis' arguments. Secondly, I repeatedly draw upon Trauma studies as a tool with which to dissect the films in question, in a way which, to my knowledge, has not been done before in relation to Korean cinema. Finally, and most importantly, I wish to use this thesis as a way of expanding upon the frameworks of traditional representative strategies. By engaging with films which discuss the colonial period directly, and then turning to situate them in relation to other films which, on the surface, have nothing to do with the nation's history, I hope to demonstrate how the traumas of a culture's history are rarely contained easily, and have a tendency to seep into a variety of modes of expression.

Late in the conduct of my research for this thesis I came across the work of Kyoung-Lae Kang, who has similarly been engaged in exploring the ways in which contemporary South Korean cinema has explored the nation's colonial past. Across her published work she has made some pertinent and insightful observations, many of which will be referenced within this thesis in due course, and in multiple ways my interaction with her research has served to clarify and crystallise my own thoughts on this topic. Although we both interrogate a number of the same concerns, particularly colonial modernity, collaboration and the comfort women issue, I wish here to briefly highlight the ways in which the research presented in this thesis extends beyond, and differs from, that of Kang. Although Kang's key texts, *Blue Swallow* (Yoon Jong-chan, 2005), *Modern Boy* (Jung Ji-woo, 2008) and *Private Eye* (Park Dae-min, 2009) are discussed at significant length in my analysis, I consider them not as 'radically altered representational mode(s)' but as more nuanced graduations of representational strategies that were circulating at the time.¹³⁰ I think that this is aptly demonstrated by my discussion of these three key texts in both of the

thesis' opening two chapters, exploring how they both challenge the nationalist paradigm in their representations, yet simultaneously fall back upon and re-articulate this same paradigm in many of the ways they confrontationally position Japanese and Korean characters. Furthermore, my discussion of Contemporary South Korean Cinema limits itself to the fiction film, albeit it fictions sometimes set in a factual historical time period, and thus does not intersect with the documentary films discussed by Kang in her dissertation.

The principle difference in the work conducted by myself and Kang is the theoretical framework around which our investigations are structured. Whereas Kang draws upon Werner Hamacher, whose argument in turn emerges from the work of Walter Benjamin, in utilising 'guilt' as the term with which to unpick these texts, I instead turn repeatedly towards trauma theory. Like guilt, the concept of trauma brings into discussion issues of memory, memorialisation and individual and cultural relations to the historic past. My issue with guilt as a framework, however, is that it can quickly collapse into an external, proscriptive value judgement, with Kang herself describing the term as 'morally charged'.¹³¹ Discussions of guilt in relation to colonialism are apt to repeat the moral stance of a nationalist position, especially if invoked without recourse to specificities, hence her assertion that the colonial films combat 'Koreans' anxious search for retributions that would correct the mistakes or deficiencies [of the past], discharging the guilt'.¹³²

What trauma allows for is a way of discussing events which overwhelm with negative affect, for if an event does not have these negative connotations it can, by definition, not be viewed as traumatic, without inherently denigrating the context of these events as being similarly negative. While this is a nuanced difference, I suggest that it allows for a discussion of aspects Korea's colonial

experience that have retroactively been viewed by the films in question as positive or attractive, without the issue of national sovereignty overwhelming the conversation. Initially a change of viewpoint might indicate a shifting of focus from perpetrators to victims, yet there is work within trauma theory has discussed the perpetrator as its focus and in doing so has positioned trauma as a 'neutral, human trait, divorced from morality'.¹³³ As such, I feel trauma theory provides an avenue through which to break down binary conceptions of victim/perpetrator, and therefore of colonised/coloniser, as well as of past/present, a key aspect of the representational strategies of the films under discussion.

Overall, my usage of trauma over guilt in this thesis is due to the contributions of trauma theory, more than any disadvantages with guilt as a framework. These advantages are multiple, but there are two key aspects upon which I wish to focus here. Firstly, given its origins in the clinical domain before its transference into the discourses of the humanities, the notion of trauma invokes not only the process of its diagnosis and modes of expression, but also its treatment. My principal argument in this thesis is that contemporary South Korean cinema has been interrogating, re-staging and re-interpreting the national past akin to the ways in which we understand the treatment of trauma, and in doing so has become part of a wider, national process that has sought to deal with the negative affect of this past. Secondly, I have applied trauma theory to these Korean cultural products in a way which has allowed it to intersect with local concepts and movements, such as the sentiment of *han* and the 'settling the past movement'. I am mindful of the ways in which academia can repeat the unbalanced, knowledge production strategies of colonialism in its contact with non-western cultural products. Rather than view South Korean

culture as an object to be dissected and examined by a tool developed in the Western academe, I hope to place trauma in conversation with concepts that have greater local cultural currency, allowing for the enrichment of both. By utilising trauma as a framework, ultimately my analysis is able to move beyond the specificities of the colonial period and look at the ways in which South Korean cinema has addressed the notion of historic trauma more broadly, an act that has ramifications for the study of South Korean cinema beyond the historical film, as well as for other national cinemas. As I discussed at the beginning of this introduction, the colonial period is just one aspect of Korean history that would reward an analysis such as that presented within this thesis. Within contemporary South Korean Cinema, the tendency to mine the traumas of the 20th century for narrative ingredients appears to be continuing unabated. The recent box-office smash *A Taxi Driver* (Jang Hun, 2017) suggests that the 1980 massacre of pro-democracy protesters in Gwangju may become the latest dark moment in recent Korean history to be exposed to the cinematic lights, ensuring that my approach will be of continued relevance in the coming years.

Theoretical Contexts

In order to effectively engage with the topic of the colonial legacy upon South Korean cinema, it became clear early on in my research that a single theoretical approach would not do justice to the breadth of responses to the colonial period exhibited by contemporary South Korean films. Rather than adopt a single critical perspective and seek to understand each of the films within the same frameworks, my approach takes the films themselves as a starting point, allowing for them to suggest the appropriate perspectives from which to interpret their meaning. Therefore, although there are multiple areas of overlap

and certain critical themes which run throughout this thesis, each chapter will require its own theoretical groundwork to be established, which will be conducted at the appropriate time. This thesis is constructed in pursuance of a degree in Film Studies, and although my theoretical references regularly cross the boundaries of my own discipline, the intent is ultimately to reveal the processes at action within the films themselves. This ensures that while the following chapters engage with areas of critical theory, and through the conjunction of these theories with contexts to which they have not previously been applied, present opportunities for their improvement and expansion, these critical approaches are not the focus of my enquiry, but tools with which to prise apart the films under examination.

The History Film, and Film as History and National Allegories

Before I continue, there are a few areas in which it is worth briefly contextualising the theoretical field of debate into which my thesis enters, as these discussions have informed my critical approach, but are often on the fringes of the arguments made within the subsequent chapters. The first topic I wish to address is the extent to which cinema's engagement with the past can be compared to more traditional forms of doing history. In his study of history films made in Hollywood in the 1950s, David Eldridge provides a concise, almost tautological definition of this form of filmmaking. According to Eldridge, a film may be classified as a history film so long as 'the setting of the film's action predates the year in which it was released by more than five years'.¹³⁴

According to Pierre Sorlin, for a film to be recognised as historical 'there must be details, not necessarily many of them, to set the action in a period which the audience unhesitatingly places in the past'.¹³⁵ An historical film, therefore, by

this definition, is a dialogue between the filmmaker and their audience, in which the context is established through the deployment of temporally specific tropes.

The historical film is a narrative mode which serves as an umbrella term for a number of distinct cinematic practices, each with their own formal codes and conventions. This thesis does not engage with the documentary film, (perhaps the first example of cinematic engagement with history that one might think of) although as Rosenstone points out, we should not be so quick to distance the documentary from more traditionally narrative forms of the history film. Documentary films do not exist via the sudden appearance of unmediated images upon a screen, instead they are artefacts 'consciously shaped into a narrative that... creates meaning of the material being conveyed'.¹³⁶ As such, they are subject to many of the same tensions and restrictions discussed below. The biopic, a form which focuses upon the life of some specific individual whose actions or circumstances somehow sets them apart from the wider masses of their time, is an ever-popular genre of the historical film. A number of the films discussed in the ensuing two chapters belong to this form of historical narrative (*Blue Swallow* and *Fighter in the Wind* (Yang Yun-ho, 2004) are notable examples), but are accompanied by those whose narratives, while intersecting with real historical figures and incidents, are more avowedly fictional (*The Sword with No Name* (Kim Yong-kyun 2009) and *My Way* for example) or even films which are entirely fictionalised narratives set within a real period in the nation's history (*Epitaph* (Jung Brothers, 2007), *Radio Dayz* (Ha Ki-ho, 2008)).

One of the key areas of discussion regarding the depiction of history in cinema within academic film studies has coalesced around the term 'heritage cinema'. Emerging in the 1990s in discussing of a cycle of British 'period dramas' or 'costume dramas' produced in the 1980s and early 90s, Andrew

Higson coined the term to discuss a certain form of historical nostalgia in Thatcherite Britain.¹³⁷ The heritage film should therefore 'be considered as a critically or theoretically constructed genre rather than an industrial one'.¹³⁸ Heritage cinema is but one aspect of a wider heritage industry, in which the past is turned into a 'series of commodities for the leisure and entertainment market'.¹³⁹ This form of filmmaking is defined by a specific opulence of *mise-en-scene*, in which the decadence of a certain type of upper middle-class/aristocratic lifestyle is privileged, resulting in the creation of a 'heritage space'.¹⁴⁰ Higson argues that in many respects, heritage 'is not a narrative cinema', but a form in which the 'evocation of pastness is accomplished by a look... not by any critical historical perspective'.¹⁴¹ This form of filmmaking has been viewed as highly ideological, submerging contemporary concerns beneath a selective vision of the national past to suit a conservative political agenda and the formation of a specific national identity.¹⁴² Within contemporary South Korean cinema and television drama, many of the texts grouped under the term *sageuk* (historical drama) could be examined in the terms of heritage cinema discussed above, with the obvious qualification that the different temporal and geographical contexts ensure that an application of such an approach requires a level of cultural translation. There are a number of films (*Untold Scandal* (E J-yong, 2005), *The King and the Clown* (Lee Joon-ik, 2005) and *Masquerade* being some of the most well-known examples of the *sageuk*) that would appear, through their lavish portrayals of the palaces and lifestyles of the *Joseon* court, to invite comparisons to British costume dramas that Higson discussed. However, with the possible exception of moments within *The Sword with No Name* and *Gabi*, films which depict the *Joseon* period, the texts explored in this thesis do not revel in the intricacies of their surroundings at the expense of

narrative to the extent suggested by the designation of 'heritage'. The material qualities of the past are subordinated to its political realities, realities which set the stage for the narratives of resistance, patriotism and adventure that this thesis examines. There are key thematic differences too, as these colonial set films often destabilise rigid binary demarcations of national identity in a way that fits poorly with the conservative tendencies that Higson identifies in British heritage cinema, a topic I explore in chapter two. Ultimately, while the concept of heritage is a useful tool with which to discuss certain South Korean historical films, it is of limited relevance to the films with which I am concerned.

Although I have suggested that the historical aesthetic is not the primary attraction of the films discussed in this thesis, all the films contained within the table presented below, which lists films set during the colonial period, attempt to cite their narratives within the past through the creation of a supposedly authentic 'look'. This look which defines a film's *mise-en-scène*, from the location and architecture visible to the clothing and hairstyles of the cast, also contains a sonic level in the inclusion of sounds associated with the period in question. The creation of this believable, historical, and believably historical world revolves not only around the inclusion of period detail, but also the erasure of anachronistic elements in order for the audience to 'unhesitatingly place' this setting within the perceived past.¹⁴³ The use of these details might be described as an *implicit* evocation of the past, and is a technique utilised by all of the films discussed in this thesis. Some films however, perhaps to establish their historical setting as immediately as possible, or to ensure that it is not missed entirely by audiences unfamiliar with the given historical context, choose to reinforce their historicity through an *explicit* grounding of the image as historical. This may occur through a number of techniques, from the depiction of

a specific, well-known historical instance, through a dated newspaper front page to, at its most obvious level, the inclusion of a title locating the action in a given place or time.

The colonial historical films produced within South Korea use both explicit and implicit evocations of the colonial period in order to locate their narratives. For example, the exact setting of *Private Eye* is never confirmed. The lack of recognisable modern features forces the audience to recognise the setting as being somewhere in the past, whilst the protagonist's outfit, and later the colonial uniforms of the police allows the spectator to narrow down the possible setting to an ever-decreasing time-frame. It is only with the appearance of Emperor Gojong in the films dénouement, and his coded reference to The Hague secret emissary affair of 1907 that the audience is able to fully interpret the chronology of the film. This is in contrast with a film such as *Once Upon a Time* (Jeong Yon-ki, 2008), over whose first shot following the credits appears a title declaring the setting to be the 4th October 1944 in Gyeongseong, the name used for colonial Seoul. Without going into extensive detail for each example, it should be understood that all of the films tabulated below use techniques such as these to either directly tell the audience, or allow them to infer, that the film is set in the past, and as such is an historical film.

The colonial historical film engages with the idea of history, 'at the very least by virtue of being set in it'.¹⁴⁴ To what extent therefore may the historical film be active in the writing of history, or in imparting historical knowledge to its audience? There is little question that historical films engage with this endeavour in a very different way to the task of history writing as we most commonly understand it, that is written, academic research. Hayden White defines these two differing forms as *historiophoty*, 'the representation of history

and our thoughts about it in visual image and filmic discourse', and historiography, 'the representation of history in verbal images and written discourse'.¹⁴⁵ According to Robert Rosenstone, the conventions and traditions of cinematic forms ensure that film is often unable to 'fulfil many of the basic demands for truth and verifiability used by all historians', for example, the 'evaluation of sources, logical argument, or systematic weighting of evidence'.¹⁴⁶ Ian Jarvie is especially critical of cinema's ability to engage in the work of history. He argues that 'real history' is the process of debating with other historians about what exactly happened, why it happened, and providing an adequate account of its consequences.¹⁴⁷ A film, by this reckoning, might present a 'one-sided view', but is unable to 'defend it, footnote it, rebut objections and criticize the opposition', nor can it state or argue for complex alternatives.¹⁴⁸

Whilst these are all valid criteria by which to judge historical research, to assume that this view encompasses the entirety of what cinematic representations of history may achieve is highly limiting. Not only does Jarvie's stance ignore that even written history itself often fails to adhere to these standards, but he also fails to acknowledge the ways in which film may be a superior method for presenting historical information, or in doing so belittles the value of these advantages. For Jarvie, film 'can cope' if history is simply 'the telling of interesting, enlightening and plausible stories'.¹⁴⁹ However, if the historical film may struggle to depict what we might consider traditional historical data, it can excel at capturing 'elements of life that we might wish to designate as another kind of data'.¹⁵⁰ Landscapes, sounds, strong emotions and physical conflicts are all elements that might 'better' be represented on film, not only with 'greater verisimilitude or stronger emotive effect', but also less ambiguously and

more accurately than by their written counterparts.¹⁵¹ Cinematic history endeavours to provide what might be described as a different kind of historical fact than that conveyed by written history, and both forms conform to different assessments of 'accuracy'. As Natalie Zemon Davis points out, the authenticity sought by the historical feature is less to do with the portrayal of events, and more to do with 'the 'look' of the past', through the depiction of believable period props, costumes and locations.¹⁵²

Davis suggests three actions that a film may undertake in order to constitute a 'good telling of the past', but which could also be described as bringing historiophoty into closer alignment with historiography.¹⁵³ The first step is that a film reminds viewers 'of the distance between past and present'.¹⁵⁴ This is established across the films in question in this thesis through a number of ways, from more basic processes such as the use of titles establishing the date of the proceedings and establishing shots which 'habituate the audience to the ambiance of the past' to more advanced cinematic techniques. These may include the flashback structures of films such as, *Le Grand Chef* (Jeon Yun-su, 2007) or *Hanbando* (Kang Woo-suk, 2006), the use of contemporary footage in *YMCA Baseball Team* (Kim Hyun-seok, 2002)¹⁵⁵, the deployment of digitally 'aged' footage at the beginning of *Epitaph*, or the transition from black and white to colour film, in a move clearly influenced by *The Wizard of Oz* (Victor Fleming, 1939), in *Radio Dayz*. By reiterating this temporal difference in such a way, the filmmakers have emphasised to their audience that these narratives take place in a time different from their own and are governed by differing codes and conventions.

Davis' second and third criteria (suggesting multiple tellings, and demonstrating where knowledge of the past comes from) are less evident

across the body of assembled colonial historical films, perhaps indicating the extent to which these films are not engaged in an overtly political agenda concerned with attempting to challenge the construction of national historiography. Whilst a film may well be able to engage in such actions, (Davis cites *Rashomon* (Akira Kurosawa, 1950) and *Citizen Kane* (Orson Welles, 1941) respectively as examples), as Jarvie points out, cinema can become 'positively *avant-garde*' when alternative interpretations are suggested.¹⁵⁶ None of the assembled films which depict the colonial period stray particularly far from narrative norms, and therefore are able to convey little of the complexity or potential for multiple readings that is evident in historiography.

If, as these writers suggest, historiophoty is in some ways almost inevitably deficient in comparison to historiography, where does the virtue of its study lie? Rosenstone argues it is becoming ever clearer that 'visual media are the chief conveyor of public history' in modern cultures.¹⁵⁷ Evocations of the past in popular visual culture have a powerful ability to engage with, and further shape, the various opinions associated with a certain historical period by their audiences. It is also important to note that these filmic depictions of the past do not exist in a vacuum. Visual media with historical settings are informed by the work undertaken in written historical discourses, alongside prevailing perceptions of that given period, as well as myriad other evocations of the past. Cinematic representations of history are exactly this, re-presentations, of an historical period, not mirror images. As representations of the past, the historical film is but one instance, of which written history is another, and both conform to the specificities of their medium.¹⁵⁸ Taken in abstraction, either mode is deficient to some extent. A period of library-based research on, for example, the D-Day landings may impart a significant number of facts and statistics relevant

to the event, but it would struggle to convey the kinetic force or the visceral impact of the moment experienced by those on the beaches as evoked in *Saving Private Ryan* (Steven Spielberg, 1998). Likewise, South Korean colonial historical films are but one part of a cultural arena that includes academic research, popular memoirs, non-cinematic fictional narratives and national acts and sites of remembrance that inform the nation's understanding of its own past. As such, they are engaged in the perpetuation of a national consciousness with respect to its history, and are involved in the genesis, preservation and deconstruction of national myths.

The question of the national is an undercurrent that runs throughout the following chapters. In examining a selection of films and exploring the connections between them and the political and cultural concerns present within the nation at the times of their productions, I am adhering to an approach that argues that all cultural products are necessarily impacted by the contexts of their production. This approach within critical theory is best encapsulated by the concept of the 'national allegory', although due to the arguably clumsy way in which the concept was introduced into the contemporary critical vernacular, it is an approach that is as criticised as it is used. Fredric Jameson's 1986 article 'Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism' is the impetus for much of the following discussion of the 'national allegory', and it is his specific introduction of the term that has ensured that it requires some contextualisation. In this article, Jameson states that 'All third-world texts are necessarily, I want to argue, allegorical, and in a very specific way: they are to be read as what I will call *national allegories*'.¹⁵⁹ It is Jameson's apparent distinction between texts from the 'first' and 'third' worlds, and his essentialism of the latter, that has drawn the most substantial criticism and comment, most notably from Aijaz

Ahmad, in his article 'Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the "National Allegory"'.¹⁶⁰

Viewing this quote in isolation, without qualification or context, one could hardly disagree with the criticism that the article provoked. However, as Imre Szeman has persuasively argued, 'it appears that almost without exception critics of Jameson's essay have wilfully misread it'.¹⁶¹ As Szeman points out through a discussion of Jameson's wider work, the 'national allegory' becomes a 'substitute term for the kind of dialectical criticism that he would like to apply to *all* cultural texts – whether third world or not'.¹⁶² Jameson's article is an intervention into a very specific cultural debate, the widening of the English literary canon in the 1980s, but its value in the context of this thesis is in the methodological approach that the author clarifies in a footnote. This approach

'involves comparison, not of the individual texts, which are formally and culturally very different from each other, but of the concrete situations from which such texts spring and to which they constitute distinct responses... Such a new cultural comparatism would juxtapose the study of the differences and similarities of specific literary and cultural texts with a more typological analysis of the various socio-cultural situations from which they spring... *Such comparatism, however, need not be restricted to third-world literature*'.¹⁶³

It is this conjunction of textual analysis and exploration of the social-cultural contexts from which the texts emerge that this thesis undertakes. The use of allegory in this context, again following Jameson, is not a 'one-dimensional view' of the signifying process, in which 'an elaborate set of figures and personifications [are] to be read against some one-to-one table of

equivalences', instead 'the allegorical spirit is profoundly discontinuous, a matter of breaks and heterogeneities, of the multiple polysemia of the dream rather than the homogeneous representation of the symbol'.¹⁶⁴ This diffuse relationship between text and context is what I take from Jameson's concept of the national allegory. The following chapters explore how the national is inscribed upon the text in ways more complex than characters serving as merely stand-ins for the nation itself.

Trauma Theory and Trauma Cinema

Over the past two decades there has been something of an explosion in interest in trauma across the humanities, what Susannah Radstone has described as an 'apparently oxymoronic "popularity" of trauma'.¹⁶⁵ The origin of the term 'trauma theory' can be traced to Cathy Caruth's 1996 monograph *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*.¹⁶⁶ Radstone charts this text, alongside Caruth's preceding edited volume *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995)¹⁶⁷ and *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* (1992) by Shoshana Feldman and Dori Laub¹⁶⁸, as instigating this new critical direction.¹⁶⁹ Caruth's work demonstrates a combination of two fields of influence, namely the medicalised aspects of trauma, particularly the clinical work of neuroscientists Van der Kolk and Van der Hart and the institutional recognition of PTSD as a genuine disorder, alongside the critical theoretical deconstruction espoused by Paul de Man.¹⁷⁰ Caruth mobilises trauma as a means to push past a perceived critical impasse, namely a concern that 'in the wake of structuralist and poststructuralist developments in literary theory... concern has risen that these linguistically orientated theories of reading deny the possibility that language can give us access to history.' These critical

perspectives 'seem to amount to a claim that language cannot refer adequately to the world and indeed may not refer to anything at all, leaving literature and language, and even consciousness in general, cut off from historical reality'.¹⁷¹ As a result, trauma theory in the vein of Caruth has been read as endeavouring to address the place of reference in the wake of such critical developments. In an effort to move past de Man's assertion that 'linguistically oriented theories do not necessarily deny reference, but rather deny the possibility of modelling the principles of reference on those of natural law'¹⁷², trauma theory 'involves the attempt to deliver deconstruction from the alleged a-historical rigid textualism which has accompanied it since its very inception'.¹⁷³ While this movement has been extremely influential, and referenced by a number of writers quoted within this text, my own approach to trauma has stemmed primarily from Ruth Leys' exceptional book *Trauma: A Genealogy*.¹⁷⁴ By contextualising the current vogue within the long history of psychoanalytical and medical approaches to the traumatic response, Leys introduces the work of Pierre Janet and William Sargant, whose approaches heavily influence the argument around which the first chapter of this thesis is constructed.

Leys' book turns, in its final chapters, into a repudiation of the work of Van de Kolk, Van der Hart and Caruth. Her disagreements with Caruth stem broadly from what Leys persuasively argues is Caruth's wilful misreading of Freud in order to contort his arguments to fit her own theoretical needs. Caruth's argument is that a traumatic incident defies the processes of representation, due to its lack of integration into consciousness. This traumatic event recurs in the life of its victim through flashbacks, and here is Caruth's central tenet, which are *precise* and *exact* reproductions of the past. There is a '*literal* registration of an event' in the mind of the individual who experiences the

traumatic incident, and traumatic repetitions are ‘*undistorted* by repression or unconscious wish’.¹⁷⁵ The medical science upon which Caruth bases this insistence upon the literalness of the traumatic representation is demonstrated by Leys to be of dubious quality.¹⁷⁶ The suggestion here, and in the work of other critics, is that this deployment of trauma in the humanities serves more to address the crisis of reference within critical theory discussed above, than it does to address the processes of traumatic experience as understood by contemporary neuroscience and psychology. As Radstone states, ‘trauma theory appears to help the Humanities move beyond the impasses and crises in knowledge posed by... [deconstruction, and the wider post-structuralist turn] without abandoning their insights. Trauma theory promises, that is, not a way around the difficulties presented by these theories, but a way through and beyond them’.¹⁷⁷ Radstone’s concern is that this strand of trauma theory prioritises the event at the expense of the individual, sidestepping the work of psychoanalysis (for example), which has demonstrated the de-centred nature of the individualised subject. Trauma theory, in the vein of Caruth, suggests a sovereign subject to whom the traumatic event occurs, and within whom this event is recorded in an entirely accurate way, with no mediation by the processes of the unconscious.¹⁷⁸ Screen studies, she elsewhere suggests, may be the perfect arena in which to contest this utilisation, due to the debates on spectatorship, mediation and fantasy which it has used to question the model of the passive spectator.¹⁷⁹

The connection between trauma and cinema has certainly become a fruitful area for academic research. Janet Walker’s book *Trauma Cinema: Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (2005) for example, looks at how two of the key areas that influenced the rise of trauma theory and memory studies

have been depicted on screen.¹⁸⁰ The role of trauma in the cinemas of the Middle East has come under scrutiny¹⁸¹, as has the way genre cinema has interacted with national traumas.¹⁸² These texts, and many besides, emerge in the wake of the clash between Caruth and Leys, and are forced to assemble their conceptions of trauma from useful fragments from the wreckage. In her book *Trauma Culture: The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (2005), E. Ann Kaplan navigates this tightrope by arguing that there are three possible brain processes undergone at the moment of trauma, an approach which allows her to engage with the most theoretically helpful elements from across the spectrum of trauma theory, without suffering from many of their pitfalls.¹⁸³ Kaplan proposes that while a trauma cannot be healed, in the sense of returning to a time before the traumatic incident, 'its pain may be worked through in the process of its being "translated" via art'.¹⁸⁴ The working through of trauma through art, in this instance through cinema, is the key theme of this thesis. Be it through the notion of traumatic catharsis, the healing of *han* or the movement to 'settle the past', I draw upon conceptions of trauma to argue that South Korean filmmakers have acted to address a trauma experienced at a cultural level. By engaging with elements coded as negative in the nation's history, by bringing them to light and ensuring that they are not forgotten or repressed by contemporary culture, or by the nation's historical record, these films go some way to diminishing the negative affect of colonial memories.

Selection of Texts

The spark of interest that would later be fanned into the flame of this thesis began with a simple coincidental juxtaposition of two films. In early 2011, whilst working on a dissertation concerned with films produced in Korea during the

colonial period I came across references to *Blue Swallow*-a rare recent film that dealt with the period I was researching. Whilst ordering a copy of the DVD from an online retailer, their website suggested that I might also be interested in Jung Ji-woo's *Modern Boy*. On viewing these two films, seeing the ways in which they were both invested in the glamour and opulence of the period, as well as the barbarity of colonial practices, it became clear that there was something circulating within these films beyond the currents of nationalism. Starting with little more than the question 'how is South Korean cinema representing the colonial period?', I first sought to establish a body of texts which spoke to this question.

My first resource in this quest were the Korean Cinema Yearbooks published annually by the Korean Film Council (KOFIC). As well as providing an analysis of the domestic box office and a variety of statistics related to the production, distribution and attendance of films generally within South Korea, the books contain specific production and plot details on all the South Korean films released within the country in that given calendar year. The sole selection criteria was that a film feature at least a small section which is set during the colonial period, here liberally taken to extend from the liberation in 1945, back into the latter quarter of the 19th century, a time in which Japanese influence on the peninsula was becoming increasingly pronounced. This initial survey, coupled with some later discoveries and more recent releases, revealed that the following films would be of relevance.

Title	Release Date	Director	Genre
<i>The Anarchists</i>	29.04.2000	Yoo Young-sik	Epic/Historical, Action
<i>2009: Lost Memories</i>	01.02.2002	Lee Si-myung	SF, Action, Drama
<i>YMCA Baseball Team</i>	02.10.2002	Kim Hyun-seok	Drama, Comedy
<i>Arirang</i>	30.05.2003	Lee Doo-yong	Drama
<i>The Doll Master</i>	30.07.2004	Jeong Yong-ki	Horror
<i>Fighter In the Wind</i>	12.08.2004	Yang Yun-ho	Action
<i>Thomas Ahn Joong Keun</i>	10.09.2004	Suh Se-won	Drama
<i>Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary</i>	15.12.2004	Song Hae-sung	Drama
<i>The Red Shoes</i>	30.06.2005	Kim Yong-gyun	Horror
<i>Haan, Han Gil Soo</i>	23.09.2005	Lee In-soo	Crime, Action
<i>Blue Swallow</i>	29.12.2005	Yoon Jong-chang	Drama
<i>Blue Sky</i>	21.04.2006	Lee In-soo	Drama
<i>Hanbando</i>	13.07.2006	Kang Woo-suk	Drama, Action
<i>Epitaph</i>	01.08.2007	Jung Brothers	Horror, Elegy
<i>Le Grand Chef</i>	01.11.2007	Jeon Yun-su	Drama
<i>Radio Dayz</i>	24.01.2008	Ha Ki-ho	Comedy, Drama
<i>Once Upon A Time</i>	31.01.2008	Jeong Yong-ki	Action, Comedy, Epic
<i>The Good, The Bad, The Weird</i>	17.07.2008	Kim Jee-woon	Oriental Western
<i>Dachimawa Lee</i>	14.08.2008	Ryoo Seung-wan	Action, Adventure, Comedy
<i>Modern Boy</i>	02.10.2008	Jung Ji-woo	Drama, Romance
<i>Private Eye</i>	02.04.2009	Park Dae-min	Crime, Thriller
<i>The Sword With No Name</i>	24.09.2009	Kim Yong-kyun	Period, Martial Arts, Romance
<i>Enlightenment Film</i>	16.09.2010	Park Dong-hoon	Drama
<i>My Way</i>	22.12.2011	Kang Jye-gyu	War, Action, Period, Drama
<i>Gabi</i>	15.03.2012	Chang Youn-hyun	Mystery, Drama
<i>The Silenced</i>	18.06.2015	Lee Hae-young	Mystery, Drama
<i>Assassination</i>	22.07.2015	Choi Dong-hoon	Action, Drama
<i>The Tiger</i>	16.12.2015	Park Hoon-jung	Epics/Historical
<i>Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet</i>	17.02.2016	Lee Joon-ik	Drama
<i>Spirit's Homecoming</i>	24.02.2016	Cho Jung-rae	Drama
<i>The Handmaiden</i>	01.06.2016	Park Chan-wook	Thriller, Drama
<i>The Age of Shadows</i>	07.09.2016	Kim Jee-woon	Action

<i>The House of the Disappeared</i>	05.04.2017	Lim Dae-woong	Mystery, Thriller
<i>Anarchist From Colony</i>	28.06.2017	Lee Joon-ik	Drama
<i>Battleship Island</i>	26.07.2017	Ryoo Seung-wan	War, Action
<i>Man of Will</i>	19.10.2017	Lee Won-tae	Drama

Table 1: Table of South Korean films set in the Japanese colonial period.

(Source: Korean Cinema Yearbooks and Korean Film Council Website
www.koreanfilm.or.kr)

Given the limited plot details provided for each film by KOFIC this list is unlikely to be entirely exhaustive. The narratives of a number of these films contain only rather oblique relationships to the colonial period, and the discovery of this connection is due to a fortuitous appearance in my wider viewing. That being said, the table above does comprise a significant body of films, which cover a number of possible representative strategies. Represented here are films set entirely in the 'pre-colonial' period, (*Gabi*, *The Sword With No Name*, *Private Eye* for example), set during the Japanese occupation, (*Once Upon A Time*, *Modern Boy*, *Radio Dayz*), set during the occupation, but outside the Korean peninsula, (*The Anarchists*, *The Good*, *The Bad*, *The Weird*) and some which merely contain historical segments or flashbacks (*Hanbando*, *Le Grand Chef*, *Enlightenment Film*). The table also contains a mix of purely fictional narratives, (*Radio Dayz*, *Epitaph*, *Dachimawa Lee*) alongside those based, at least partly, on real historical figures (*Thomas Ahn Joong Keun*, *Blue Swallow*, *Fighter In The Wind*). Thus, whilst this selection criteria may not permit me to conduct a thoroughly exhaustive analysis of all films released since the year 2000 that depict the colonial era on-screen, I am nonetheless able to

investigate a variety of ways in which this period of history has been represented cinematically.¹⁸⁵

The table above delineates the films that are of primary interest for the first two chapters of this thesis, those that concern direct representation of the colonial period. The latter three chapters, while still focused upon Korea's colonial experience, approach the topic from a less direct standpoint, and therefore branch out beyond this list of films. In chapter three, I investigate how a popular folk song, *Arirang*, has been used for multiple purposes in the modern era, many of which resonate with its colonial history. The selection of films for this chapter was therefore determined by their utilisation of the song in question. In order to demonstrate how this song creates a bridge of continuity between the colonial period and the modern era, and in order to greater contextualise more modern films, the chapter discusses two texts, *Arirang* (Na Un-gyu, 1926) and *Seopyeonje* which emerged outside of the thesis' otherwise post-millennial focus.

In the final two chapters, this thesis investigates two related narrative tropes, the figure of the ghost and amnesiac protagonists. The importance of these two topics to the themes under discussion in this work, particularly in regard to trauma and the impact of the past upon the present, is apparent in a number of the films tabulated above (*The Doll Master*, *The Red Shoes*, *Epitaph*, *The Silenced* and *The House of the Disappeared*). Although these films all have a colonial connection, it is their use of temporality, rather than their representational strategies, that I chose to focus upon in my analysis. They therefore intersect with the wider genre of the supernatural horror film in this respect and, as such, my analysis draws upon a few representative examples of this cinematic form.

As should be evident from the selection methodology sketched above, it is not my intention in this thesis to be exhaustive or comprehensive in my discussion of the themes of this topic. Rather than accounting for each instance in which the colonial period has been invoked by contemporary cinema, I am instead concerned with tendencies that cross multiple texts, illustrating new ways of interacting with the past, and the meanings that these interactions hold. There is, as always in an endeavour such as this, a subjective layer to my analysis. This may mean, for example, that of the two colonially set comedies released in 2008, *Radio Dayz*, of which I am rather fond, receives recurrent mention in this thesis, whereas the execrable *Dachimawa Lee* is notable in its absence. Likewise, texts which have received a larger degree of attention elsewhere, *The Good*, *The Bad*, *The Weird* or *Modern Boy* for instance, have received less discussion here than they might otherwise in order to avoid repetition.

Perhaps the most significant way that this research has been impacted by the subjectivity of its author is that due to my linguistic limitations, this thesis has solely engaged with research presented in the English language. As discussed above, there has been, in recent years, an explosion of publications relating to Korea's colonial period in the Korean language. Besides these sources concerned with the historical period, there will undoubtedly be swathes of literature and criticism devoted to the films discussed in this thesis with which I am unable to interact. As an essentially monolingual individual who has lived and been educated in one country for the entirety of my life, I am aware that my observations are informed by a specific cultural and academic perspective. It is my fervent hope that this work will eventually be corroborated, contradicted, and criticised by individuals whose own perspectives will allow them to expand upon

my efforts in ways I am incapable of imagining. A topic with a breadth such as this one will not be exhausted by a single thesis, and I look forward to the moment in which the films and critical voices necessarily or unavoidably overlooked in the pages that follow receive the attention that they are denied by the constraints of this research and this researcher.

Thesis Structure

The first chapter of this thesis investigates films which directly represent Korea's colonial experience on screen. Drawing on trauma theory, this chapter examines how many elements of these films conform to a nationalist paradigm that views this historical period as replete with repression and brutality. I focus upon how three key roles; nationalist hero, villainous coloniser, and abused comfort woman, are represented with the aim of eliciting an emotional response from a contemporary audience. Coupling this representational strategy with the work of trauma theorists, I propose that this emotional engagement may be considered as an approach to the treatment of trauma. Besides the very brief allusion to the topic made by Cynthia Childs, discussed above, studies of films set in the colonial period have so-far failed to address the question of trauma at work in the texts. The value of this approach, I propose, is that it conceives of these films as 'working through' the traumatic event, a process that should ultimately lead to a lessening of its negative impact.

The second chapter continues with the examination of films set during the colonial period, but instead explores how more nuanced, ambivalent depictions of this phase of Korea's history have existed alongside the traumatic evocations discussed previously. The key element in these representations is modernity, both as a glamorous spectacle, and as a process through which the

concept of a Korean national identity was transformed. These transformations, moulded as they were by the twin forces of modernity and colonialism, served to destabilise boundaries that the nationalist perspective on history has previously discussed as rigid and immutable. I explore how the distinction between coloniser/colonised and between Japanese/Korean subjects becomes less an instance of binary demarcation, and more a spectrum, upon which subjects are able to transition fluidly, and at will, as necessity dictates. By depicting Korean subjects as active agents within the colonial system, filmmakers are challenging simplistic assumptions that equate Koreanness with victimhood and attribute all aggression to the Japanese. In order for the nation to truly address its colonial legacy, a task in which these films are but one key element, it must acknowledge the role Korean subjects played in the subjugation of their fellow citizens.

From chapter three onwards I steadily move away from films that directly reference the Japanese colonisation of Korea, instead looking to trace its impact in less immediately perceptible ways. There are three key frameworks which come into play in these latter chapters. Each will be explored fully in due course, but here I wish to introduce each approach in order to clearly illuminate how they serve as different perspectives from which to examine my area of inquiry, the legacy of Japanese colonialism upon contemporary cinema. Firstly, I extend beyond the notion of trauma as discussed previously through the usage of the local concept of *han*. The expression of *han* is tied to national culture, and particularly folk forms, and thus I introduce *Arirang* as an object capable of engaging with *han*, and a song with multiple historical significances. I look at how *Arirang* has been used cinematically in three different time periods as a way of purging *han*, each instance containing within itself references to the

colonial period, and relying upon the previous accumulations of meaning that the song has accrued in order to enhance this element of their implementation. Finally, I look at how two contemporary South Korean directors, as well as a selection of national organisations, have used Arirang as a tool with which to question Korea's place in an increasingly globalised world. By addressing my central concern, namely the legacy of historical trauma, through the concept of *han*, a notion with greater resonance in the context of the films being discussed, my analysis is granted a layer of cultural specificity that studies of trauma may be prone to overlook. At the same time, I am aware that as a European constructing my analysis around a concept such as *han* raises the potential for my discussion to be, however unintentionally, undercut by elements of cultural essentialism and orientalism. In order to guard against this as much as possible, I limit my discussion of *han* to films which consciously invite such an approach, either through reference to *han* within their diegesis, the statements of their director, or through their deployment of Arirang. As I will demonstrate, Arirang is frequently linked to the sentiment of *han* by both filmmakers and cultural commentators. Through Arirang I am able to approach the colonial period and the concept of *han* in a method that compliments my earlier discussion of trauma whilst also providing a level of contextual grounding that this theory may lack. Ultimately *han* is a perspective that allows for a more nuanced understanding of certain Korean cultural products, and one which illuminates how personal and national sorrows may be presented as feeding upon and reflecting each other.

Chapter four returns to films set in the colonial period in order to explore how figures from the past return and impact upon the present day. Influenced by the spectral turn in critical theory, this chapter is concerned with the ways in

which the ghost film allegorically serves to highlight the interconnectedness of distinct temporalities. This chapter draws on the concept of hauntology, established by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*¹⁸⁶, coupled with a more contextually grounded approach to spectres that is grounded in the circumstances in which they emerge which follows from the work of Renée L. Bergland and Bliss Cua Lim. This thesis demonstrates how the concepts of trauma and spectrality can be deployed as two complementary approaches to interrogate the relationship between the past and the present. Both are concerned with unbidden returns, the former with repressed traumatic incidents, the latter with phantoms. While the spectre, like the traumatic repetition, destabilises the present through the presence of that which we believed was consigned to the past, it contains within itself what Bliss Cua Lim describes as a temporal critique.¹⁸⁷ The spectre breaks down temporal demarcations, insisting upon the coevalness of different temporalities. What spectrality represents, as Fredric Jameson explains, 'is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be'.¹⁸⁸ Alongside trauma theory, spectrality has emerged as a powerful critical tool with which to chart the impact of an unacknowledged past upon the present. In this chapter I focus upon three different temporal convergences, a colonial past that haunts itself, the colonial haunting of the post-colonial period, and the contemporary era haunted by a non-colonial past, I demonstrate how the recurrence of the revenant disrupts linear temporality, highlighting how the present is unable to escape the repercussions of an unsettled past. The actions of the past reverberate into the present day, and by failing to address historical traumas at the time, we ensure that they linger onwards, distorting the future.

The thesis' final chapter continues this interrogation of the present's relation to a traumatic past through a discussion of amnesiac protagonists. I consider how a number of contemporary films have drawn upon the Gothic mode in their presentation of narratives in which their leading figure is forced to confront painful memories that have been previously repressed. Before the spectral turn swept through academia following Derrida's revival of the revenant as an object of critical enquiry, the Gothic provided a key framework within which to engage with narrative of the spectral. Gothic narratives are those in which occluded secrets are exhumed to dramatic and often violent effect. The Gothic provides more than just an opportunity to explore the phantoms discussed in the previous chapter from a new perspective however. It brings with it its own sets of codes, tropes and relations, ones which I demonstrate have been wholeheartedly embraced by a cadre of contemporary Korean filmmakers. One such recurrent trope, the inability of the central figure to access their own history, I argue, allegorises a wider cultural turn that seeks to address the nation's past. 'Settling the past' is a phrase that has come to refer to a renewed tendency within a number of arenas, particularly the political, the legislative, and the academic, to address historical incidents that have been occluded by official state narratives and to seek various forms of redress. This movement to 'settle' the past, perhaps best exemplified by the multiple 'truth councils' that have become part of the nation's interrogation of its history, parallels the investigative narratives of the films under discussion in this chapter, and is likewise dominated by the revelation of uncomfortable familial truths. Ultimately the bringing of the past to light has the same intended effect, both narratively and culturally; to allow for its integration into the historical record, and in doing so purge it of its negative affect. Both this chapter and the

one which precedes it address the failures of South Korean society of the past to adequately address the nation's colonial experience in the immediate post-liberation period. By deferring decolonisation, they suggest, the negative effects of colonisation have been allowed to seep into the modern era, infecting the post-colonial nation.

This thesis argues that it is only by addressing and coming to terms with the traumatic elements of our past that we can ever hope to be rid of their negative influence. Both directly and indirectly, South Korean filmmakers have put the colonial period on screen, highlighting the myriad ways in which its influence has remained potent into the present day. The different critical approaches which I adopt in the following chapters (trauma theory, colonial modernity, *han*, spectrality, and the Gothic) each allow for a different way of addressing this same central theme, with each chapter demonstrating a different model for how we might trace the impact of a troubled past upon a contemporary cultural form. My intent is that the following chapters expand the scope of the discussion that has so far surrounded these representations, particularly through my explanation of how the films destabilise binary identity positions. I expand upon the extant literature by introducing the question of trauma into my analysis, a framework I suggest is vital in understanding not only the representative strategies of the films I analyse, but also the extent to which they may ameliorate the negative impact of this historical era.

Chapter One

The Fall of a Nation: Colonial Traumas

In their attempts to construct a viable national cinema, South Korean filmmakers have turned time and time again to nationally specific incidents and themes, mining the nation's past to ensure that an interrogation of the nation's identity serves as a thematic undercurrent for vast swathes of their cinematic output. It is perhaps inevitable therefore that an ever-growing body of films should emerge that draw upon a comparatively recent period in the nation's history, one in which the very existence of the Korean nation came under threat, namely the period of Korea's colonisation by Japan. In this chapter, I consider the ways in which films set during this historical period utilise this context as a site of conflict and trauma. The Japanese occupation served not only to eradicate the nation's sovereignty, but also intended to bring about the demise of its culture and identity. By focusing upon this period, filmmakers have explored what it means to live in an occupied nation, but more specifically, they have asked what it meant to be Korean at this point in history, the ramifications of which has impact to this day.

In reconstructing the past, these filmmakers engage with, and impact upon, the ways in which this specific historical instance is understood by a contemporary audience. In the introduction to this thesis I have outlined the criteria through which I sought to constitute a body of contemporary colonial films that would provide the basis for this study. These films comprise a variety of genres, and were produced with dramatically different budgets, intended audiences and eventual levels of success. For the sake of categorisation, I describe these texts as contemporary South Korean colonial history films, but

this is in no way an attempt to elide the differences between these individual films, nor to suggest that they are unified by a single, overriding perspective. Instead what I intend to explore are the ways in which a group of different filmmakers, working across the spectrum of the contemporary South Korean film industry, have all drawn upon a specific period of the nation's past, engaging with each other and the wider cultural understanding of this period, and in doing so have illuminated the ways in which this past still resonates with contemporary society.

In structuring this thesis, I have broken down my discussion of these contemporary South Korean colonial historical films into two separate, but interlocking and overlapping chapters. One of my main interests in these texts is in their representational strategies, in particular how this period and its agents have been memorialised and mythologised, and to what extent this is in keeping with, or contrary to, current ideological positions on this historical period. The following chapter will explore how certain characters represented within this selection of films force us to acknowledge the ways in which concepts such as the nation and national identity become less tangible in the context of colonisation. However, in this first chapter I wish to turn to how aspects of these films have engaged with and upheld a Korean nationalist paradigm. In order to examine the extent to which these films have dealt with representing this aspect of the colonial period, I have chosen to focus upon three key themes. Firstly, how figures of Korean resistance, both those based upon historical characters as well as fictional constructions, have been portrayed on screen. For those films which focus upon depicting historical figures who actually existed, presenting these characters as archetypes of nationalist resistance takes precedence over any other elements of their biographies. Secondly, I turn to

look at the representation of Japanese figures, and those who maintain positions of colonial authority. Finally, and drawing from current debates in trauma theory, I question whether it is possible to examine national collectives from the perspective of a diagnosis of trauma, and the extent to which it is possible for cinema as a medium to adequately represent traumatic incidents.

Constructing Korean Nationalist Heroes

The Korean Monarchy

A significant aspect of the Japanese colonisation of Korea was the colonial administration's effort to absorb the Korean people into the national body through a forced acceptance of traditional Japanese culture at the expense of their own native language and customs. How might a threat to such abstract concepts as a nation's culture or its sense of national identity be invoked by cinema, a medium which appeals principally to the visual sense? Across a number of recent South Korean films this challenge has been met with an allegorical anthropomorphism, in which the figure of Korean resistance stands in for the nation's sense of national identity.

Of all the possible figures one might choose to stand in for and represent a nation and its people, few could be more iconic or emblematic than a member of a nation's royal family. For those nations that have one, above and beyond their actual legal functions, a royal family symbolises two important attributes, key to the formation of a national consciousness. Firstly, the monarchy provides a sense of unity, in that all citizens of the nation may be considered to be governed by the same entity, regardless of the variations in regional governance, as well as serving as a unifying figure from whom all legislation emanates. Alongside this, the royal family emerges as an icon of continuity,

perhaps through a single monarch presiding over a number of changes to a society, but more evidently through their genealogy, which intersects with the nation's past and, through offspring, provides direction for its future. Within the Korean context, the imperial lineage has developed increased significance in relation to the Japanese occupation, as the Treaty of Annexation formally brought to an end the rule of the Joseon dynasty over the peninsula, which had lasted for over five hundred years.

The cinematic representation of the Korean monarchy therefore recalls the nation's shattered progression, illustrating how the Japanese administration effectively decapitated the nation through the removal of its figurehead. Two key figures within the context of this decimation of the monarchy are therefore Emperor Gojong, the monarch deposed by the Japanese colonisation, and his first wife Empress Myeongseong, commonly known as Queen Min, who was assassinated by the Japanese in 1895. Their tragic fates are used to parallel that of their nation, and through their representation the Korean nationalist project is granted a voice. Their cinematic reconstruction inscribes these royal figures as emblematic of the rebellion, resistance and resilience of the Korean people.

Kim Yong-gyun's 2009 film *The Sword with No Name* is ostensibly a biopic of the life of Queen Min, refracted through the prism of a love story between herself and a former bounty-hunter who has sworn to protect her. Despite the liberties taken with the original historical narrative, most notably an elision of the passage of time, which ensures that the Queen, assassinated shortly before her forty-fourth birthday, is indistinguishable from the sixteen-year-old who first entered the palace, the film's narrative is inexorably bound to the political circumstances of the time. Through their attachment to the Queen,

the audience is introduced to the historical context of the film, and through her the film's nationalist message is declared to its spectators.

The positioning of the film's politics is indicated from the very first words we hear from Min Ja-young, the future queen. Sitting in a room with her guardian and analysing a map, she declares that 'Joseon is such a small country, but it stands against big countries. How brave it is'.¹ By having her guardians declare that she is 'already speaking like a queen', the film presents Min as having an inherent and natural bond to her nation. Following her entry into the world of complex palatial and international politics, this relationship between Queen and country ensures that the film privileges her voice above that of the King and his father. Whereas the men of the palace are intent on pursuing isolationist policies and placating Japan, Min is shown to be fascinated by the western world, and actively works towards opening up Korea. In this respect, the depiction of Queen Min in this film is designed to appeal to a young, contemporary, cosmopolitan audience, through linking her interests and desires to their modern reality. Whilst the Queen's passion to try new things, be they smoking, chocolate or corsets, places her closer to the modern world than that of the traditional Joseon dynasty, her political intentions, to open up Korea to international trade and influences, have reached their full realisation in contemporary globalised South Korea. The Queen's seemingly eternal youth and the romantic elements introduced between her and the fictional figure of the bodyguard seem likewise to be elements intended to court a demographic familiar with the Joseon dynasty through its appearance in popular TV dramas such as *Jewel In The Palace* (2003-2004) and *Hwang Jin Yi* (2006).

Ultimately, this depiction of Queen Min allows for events of global political significance to be reconfigured on a more personal, emotional level. In

her final moments, the Queen stands for her nation, and has to be struck down by Japanese forces. The conclusion of *The Sword With No Name* restages her assassination in unashamedly tragic and patriotic tones. A group of Japanese men storm the Queen's chamber, their leader wearing a Japanese military uniform and his henchmen clothed in samurai-style kimonos; they declare their actions as being for the 'greater prosperity of the Far East'.² The Queen's handmaidens and her bodyguard are all slaughtered, leaving Min to face the assassins alone. 'I am not afraid of you', she declares, before imploring all present, audience included, not to forget her or this day. Like the small country she observed on her map at the very beginning of the film, Queen Min stands against much larger opponents.

As the musical score swells with a progression of slow, mournfully held notes, the film slips into slow motion and the Queen is repeatedly impaled by the Japanese intruders. (Figures 1.1 and 1.2) That Min's final word is 'Johannes', the name of her bodyguard, as well as the extended flashback sequence following their death and incineration, ensures that the romantic elements of the film's narrative are foregrounded, heightening the tragic sentiment of the film's denouement. Queen Min is positioned as emblematic of the Korean nationalism that was destroyed by the Japanese, one that embraced both traditional culture and the progression of modernity and sought to see Korea integrated into a global, rather than merely regional, community of nations. Her demise comes not from a lack of strength or courage, but from the overwhelming aggression of the Japanese.



Figures 1.1 and 1.2: Queen Min's assassination by Japanese figures in *The Sword with No Name*

The Queen's invocation to collective memory when confronted with her inevitable demise is highly evocative of how the same scene is reconstructed in Kang Woo-suk's *Hanbando* (2006). As their final acts, both depictions of the Queen call forth in the hope that their death will be remembered before the fatal blows are delivered. The significance granted to a character's final words

ensure that the message of memorialisation, an implicit aspect of all these films that recreate the tragedies of the colonial past, becomes a rallying cry for the films. Besides merely recreating the scene of the Queen's assassination in the hope that by providing a new visual interpretation of historical events they will become revitalised for a contemporary audience, *Hanbando* contains a scene in which the protagonist somewhat metatextually lectures an audience for their lack of historical knowledge, and their reliance upon films and popular culture to provide facts about their past. Choi Min-jae, a renegade history professor around whom the film's narrative circulates, is shown teaching a class of middle-aged women. His frustration that his class does not know the significance of the date November 17th (the day of the signing of the treaty which made Korea a protectorate of Japan) is confounded by the fact that his evocation of the assassination of Queen Min is significant to them only in its relationship to elements of popular culture, such as pop music videos and a musical. In a line that seems to predict *The Sword with No Name*, the only aspect that seems to have struck a chord with one of professor Choi's students is how 'hot' the actor playing the Queen's bodyguard was. He eventually dismisses his class in disgust.

In staging this scene, *Hanbando* is confronted with an inevitable contradiction of its own making. In decrying the representation of the past in popular culture for failing to convey the seriousness and significance of historical events, the film pre-emptively criticises its own narrative devices. The film grants only a small percentage of its one hundred and forty-seven-minute running time to flashbacks to the colonial period, instead devoting the majority of its attention to a contemporary political arena dominated by weighty and extraordinarily polemicized expressions of nationalistic fervour, in an attempt to

evade its own criticism. The statement made explicit in *Hanbando*, is that while contemporary audiences may not have entirely forgotten Queen Min, the political context of her assassination has been eclipsed by the romanticisation of her image. Whilst neither *Hanbando* nor *The Sword With No Name* could be claimed to be avoiding this trend, both conform to it in order to build upon the image of Queen Min as a figure of Korean nationalist resistance to the ever-increasing imperialist designs of Japan. In death, she asks her audience not only to remember her, but also to remember 'this day' or her 'blood', so that the perpetrators of this crime might not escape the judgement of history.

The representation of Queen Min described above shifts the terms of discussion regarding colonisation from one of Korean weakness to one of Japanese aggression. Contemporary depictions endeavour to transform the position that the final figures in the Joseon dynasty hold in the collective Korean consciousness. Rather than being responsible for the fall of the nation due to their inability to hold back Japan, instead they are presented as patriotic figures who were inevitably overwhelmed by the technological and military might of Japan. Cinematic representations of King Gojong closely adhere to this approach, and if viewed as one continuous chronological narrative, depict the transformation of a weak-willed man into a strong, nationalist figure.

The Gojong depicted from the time of his Queen's assassination is far from the powerful monarch one would hope for in a time of national crisis. In *Hanbando* the King is isolated by the Japanese swordsmen and can only listen helplessly as Queen Min delivers her final lines and is executed. Likewise, in *The Sword With No Name*, Gojong is portrayed as being dominated both by his father and the Japanese ambassadors concerned with the nation's involvement

with Russia. Neither recreation depicts the King as having the same force of will or nationalist fervour as his doomed wife.

On February 11th 1986, a few months after the murder of the Queen, Gojong and his son, the crown prince, disguised themselves as court ladies and absconded in covered sedan chairs to the Russian legation.³ Gojong spent nearly a year sheltering with the Russians before returning to his palace and it is in this period of time that *Gabi* (also known as *Russian Coffee*) is set. The film is an adaptation of a novel by Kim Tak-hwan, which in turn was inspired by an actual historical attempt on the King's life.⁴ In the film, two exiled Koreans are forced by Japanese agents to engage in an attempt to assassinate Gojong by poisoning his coffee. This setup provides the opportunity to represent the King outside of the constraints and ceremony of palatial life and allows the film to engage with Gojong as an individual rather than simply a historical figure. As the film progresses, the audience comes to know this evocation of Gojong through the growth of the relationship between the King and Tanya, his would-be assassin, which evolves through a series of conversations over the ubiquitous coffee.

The historical reputation and perceptions of King Gojong are called to the fore in a scene in which the concerned King asks Tanya what his citizens think of him. Far from comforting the King, Tanya replies that the people think he has 'neglected' them, only loves money, and is hiding because he is afraid of Japan. This comment appears to spur the King into action, as if the reminder of his people were enough to shake him from the traumatised existence which he has maintained since fleeing the palace. Occurring just after the midpoint of the film, this conversation sees Gojong become a far more active agent in the progression of the narrative, as gradually he takes ever-larger steps to confront

the Japanese in Korea. Firstly, the King uses Tanya to launch a mission to rescue a resistance fighter who endeavoured to avenge the death of the Queen. Later, at a diplomatic meal with Russian and Japanese delegates present, he launches into a tirade against the Japanese officers who have killed Korean citizens living in the mountains. Both events serve to enlist the King into the service of a narrative of resistance, and in doing so they take a formerly aloof figure and present him as an evocative spokesperson for the suffering endured by the Korean people of the time.

Like *The Sword With No Name*, *Gabi*'s fictional narrative is ultimately eclipsed by the historical events within which it sought to locate itself. Following the conclusion of the assassination thread of the film, there is a coda in which Tanya describes how Gojong returned to Deoksu palace and established the Korean empire. By making himself an Emperor, Gojong declared himself and his nation to be independent of foreign control. Whilst this act may have ultimately proved futile in the King's own lifetime, *Gabi*'s final images demonstrate how his actions have resounded to this day. Upon his return from the legation, with the help of a Russian architect, Gojong had the pavilion Jeonggwanheon built upon the grounds of the palace. This pavilion is famous not only for being the site where Gojong would sit and enjoy his coffee, but also where the historic plot to poison his coffee actually took place. Gojong survived, as did the building, and his legacy. *Gabi* transitions into its credit sequence with a sweeping shot of Jeonggwanheon in the present day, bustling with tourists and surrounded by the gleaming high-rises of contemporary Seoul. (Figures 1.3 and 1.4) Regardless of the efficacy of Gojong's stand against the Japanese, its significance lies in its iconographic value. As the Queen faced her assassins, Gojong faced the Japanese in defiance, in an act that, the film suggests,

resonated through the ages. Jeonggwanheon, a structure that withstood the period of colonialism and is now integrated into the modern cityscape, functions as a bridge between the two historical periods, speaking to a continuation of the ideals of Korean nationalism, modernity and independence that were expressed by Gojong in the film. Both Emperor Gojong and his queen may have ultimately succumbed to the tide of Japanese colonial aggression, but the aforementioned films invoke their legacies to suggest that their ideals persist into the present, unbowed, unbent and unbroken by the forces that destroyed them.



Figure 1.3: Tourists in Jeonggwanheon (from *Gabi*)



Figure 1.4: Jeonggwanheon and the cityscape of Seoul (from *Gabi*)

Gojong makes two further appearances that warrant discussion across the body of South Korean colonial historical films, both of which endeavour to recall how the monarch proved to be a continuous thorn in the side of the Japanese administrators who had seized control of his country, as well as how the King was connected to wider acts of resistance to the Japanese. The first of these appearances, in order of the chronology of their setting, is in the closing scene of *Private Eye* (Park Dae-min, 2009). After having exposed an opium smuggling and child prostitution ring involving the Japanese administration in Korea, the film's hero, a private detective, is summoned to a secret meeting. There, a man in Western dress asks the detective to retrieve an important letter that has been lost at The Hague in the Netherlands. This man is revealed to be King Gojong, and the mission he sets the detective is one which bought about the King's eventual downfall.

Thus far, *Private Eye* had given no clear indication as the precise historical context of its setting, although various aspects all suggest that it is in

the early colonial period. This reference to The Hague roots the narrative firmly in 1907 through its evocation of an event sometimes termed 'The Secret Emissary Affair'. In this year, the second world peace conference was to be held in the Netherlands. Gojong sent three envoys, in order that they plead to the international community for help for Korea and that they condemn the actions of Japan in seizing control of the peninsula. When the envoys arrived they were denied access to the conference, because, as Korea was by this point officially a 'protectorate' of Japan, it was not entitled to diplomatic representation.⁵ Despite failing in their primary mission, the envoys still managed to plead their case in private to many of the attending delegations, and whilst there was no practical result, they had publicised their grievances and caused Japan to face some considerable criticism.⁶ Japan's anger at Gojong's rebelliousness led to his forced abdication shortly after this event.

By indirectly referencing this incident, *Private Eye* goes beyond the detective's assertion that Gojong is 'one handsome king' to recall, how he stood up for the nation against the Japanese, an act which cost him his throne. Following his abdication, the King lived out his days confined to Deoksu palace, but in January 1919, the former-emperor died suddenly, with no known previous illness. Perhaps inevitably, rumours circulated that the Japanese had poisoned him. *Hanbando* goes beyond merely suggesting this as explanation for the King's demise; rather it stages a historical flashback scene that asserts this allegation, cross-cut with scenes of the fictional president being poisoned in the film's contemporary strand. As well as depicting Gojong's death as a result of Japanese actions, one of a litany of allegations made by *Hanbando*, the film, like *Private Eye*, obliquely points to wider acts of resistance. The death of the deposed King was one of the contributing factors to the March 1st uprising of

1919, the largest scale revolt against Japanese administration that occurred during the colonial rule, a rebellion originally scheduled for March 3rd, the date of his funeral.

Across *The Sword With No Name*, *Private Eye*, *Gabi* and *Hanbando*, the Korean monarchy appears, often briefly, in order to remind contemporary audiences of its existence and point to historic acts of resistance. Given their privileged positions as figureheads, Emperor Gojong and Empress Myeongseong become allegorical symbols of their nation. Both stand against the Japanese interests in the peninsula, both are overwhelmed, and both must ultimately die. Revealingly, their appearances in contemporary South Korean cinema have focused almost exclusively on the confrontational relationship that they had with the Japanese, ensuring that any other elements of their reigns or personalities are overlooked in favour of their construction as anti-Japanese nationalist figures. That their resistance was ultimately unsuccessful is something of which all the texts are aware, but by repeating and recreating these gestures of defiance in order to inspire later generations, these films turn alleged historical actions into evocative national fables.

As the Japanese tightened their grip on 20th century Korea, gaining further and further control with each successive treaty, the possibilities of resistance within the political sphere dwindled. Japan's seizure of the nation's diplomatic functions did not ensure the wilful compliance of the peninsula's inhabitants however, and while the nation's ruling elite may have been silenced, the contempt which many Korean people felt for their new colonial masters was about to become realised.

The Resistance Fighter

The shifts in geopolitical boundaries that brought about the Second World War and continued throughout its duration gave birth to a great number of resistance movements across the globe. Whilst Korea's experience of occupation came as a result of another nation's colonial ambition, rather than territorial conquest as the result of military conflict, the experience is not wholly different from that experienced by the European nations which, for a time, fell to the Third Reich. In this respect, the deployment of resistance narratives within contemporary South Korean cinema parallels the usage of the resistance in post-war French culture. Writing about what he terms the 'Resistance myth', and how it has been deployed in contemporary French politics, Gino Raymond states that this myth was 'the self-conscious fruit of necessity'.⁷ The 'appropriation and mythification of history' demonstrated by invocations of the resistance in the political sphere is borne out of the desire 'to foster a sense of national unity', in this case, in the wake of an event that has challenged the nation's integrity.⁸ A nationalist resistance movement provides a source of pride for those who might otherwise find only treachery, collaboration and shame in the dark periods of their nation's history.

The usage of the term myth in this context is not intended to discredit the actual existence of a resistance. In discussing the 'Resistance myth', my intention is not to claim that a story of resistance has been created that has no basis in historical fact, but to demonstrate how these historical incidents of resistance have been narrativised and amplified in order to fit into the larger, national grand narrative. Contemporary South Korean cinema has, as we have seen, drawn from the lives of real historical figures in order to tell tales of

resistance to the Japanese occupation. This approach is, however, not limited solely to members of the Korean royal family. A number of characters who were instrumental in acts of rebellion towards the Japanese have been resurrected by filmmakers in order to speak once more, to address an audience for whom their actions are part of an ever-receding national history. Yet, unlike the monarchs discussed above, these real-life resistance fighters emerge as merely a small faction of an ever-expanding community of nationalists, terrorists and anarchists dominated by fictional creations. For whilst specific historical events from the colonial period have inspired a number of recent films, the broader historical context itself has spawned even more, texts which present fictional narratives infused with period detail, peopled by constructed characters who serve as archetypes for the age. Thus, in examining figures of Korean resistance to the Japanese occupation in contemporary cinema, I will discuss characters who exist solely within the realms of their respective narratives, as well as those with a genuine historical presence and cultural capital outside of their recent cinematic manifestations.

What, however, is the purpose of the Resistance myth in contemporary Korean culture? I suggest that the repeated portrayal of Korean resistance fighters within films set during the Japanese occupation reinforces the narrative of nationalist resistance capitalised upon within the political arena by both Korean states in the post-colonial era. North of the Demilitarised Zone, the mythology that has built up around the DPRK's first leader, Kim Il-sung (1912-1994, Premier of the DPRK 1948-1972, President of the DPRK 1972-1994), is founded upon his actions as the leader of an army of guerrilla fighters. Likewise, in the South, Syngman Rhee's (1875-1965, President of the ROK 1948-1960) membership of the exiled Korean provisional government served to provide his

presidency with legitimacy. For both parties, narratives of resistance allowed for the emergence of the Korean nation as a constant, vital force. Rather than being eradicated by the Japanese occupation, nationalist spirit was merely displaced, driven either underground or into exile by threats of persecution. In constructing or replaying narratives of resistance, these films draw a line of continuity from the pre-colonial era of Korean sovereignty to the contemporary age.

Within the Korean context, the Resistance myth is constructed in part from the actions of a few historical resistance fighters who have come to be lauded as national heroes. The two most prominent figures of resistance to the occupation seen across the body of contemporary films set in the colonial period are Kim Gu (1876-1949) and Ahn Jung-geun (1879-1910).⁹ The former is represented as a political agent and the leader of the underground movement, whereas the latter is an everyday figure, responsible for the most iconic act of nationalist terrorism that the period saw.

The most striking element of Kim Gu's appearances across this body of films is the way in which he serves as a figurehead across a disparate range of resistance narratives, rather than taking a central role in any of the films. His name is invoked to provide an aspect of ideological legitimacy to the actions of resistance fighters, who, more often than not, are presented more as bumbling slapstick figures than as intellectual, politically engaged activists. Kim Gu himself is as much an emblem of the nation at this point as King Gojong was in the films discussed previously, yet exists as an almost spectral presence rather than as a recognisable person. Nowhere is this more evident than in his brief appearance within *The Anarchists*. As the titular anarchists eat in a small cafe, having completed an anti-Japanese attack, one of the characters launches into

a tirade about how the Provisional Government is selling out to the Japanese. Another member of the group argues that Kim Gu is different, and is working hard to provide for the exiled Koreans. 'Kim Gu beat and killed Japanese officials just like us!' he declares. At this moment, an older man in the foreground stops eating, stands and leaves the room. The leader of the anarchists remarks that this man was Kim Gu. Despite being a hero of the Korean resistance that all the protagonists knew about, only one actually recognised him. The man's reputation precedes him, one could say. His role as a benefactor of the resistance is further emphasised when a rock comes flying through the cafe's window. The group look outside to see Kim stood calmly in the street. With a nod of his head he alerts them to the squadron of Japanese troops at the end of the road, who have just been alerted to their location, and thus he facilitates their escape. Despite the brevity of his role, in which he appears on screen for only a few seconds and without a single line of dialogue, Kim plays a pivotal role in the film's narrative, and at the same time, the wider cultural knowledge of Korean resistance in this period.

Kim Gu's legendary status in relation to rebellion against the Japanese is reinforced in both *Gabi* and *Once Upon a Time*. The former film references the killing of a Japanese citizen by Kim as retaliation for the assassination of Empress Myeongseong. As discussed above, *Gabi* invests its depiction of Gojong with allegorical significance, ensuring that the King stands as a representation of the nation. Thus, when he remarks that Kim murdered the Japanese man 'for him', Kim's actions may well be read as serving the nation as much as they serve his King. The depiction of Kim as the iconic leader of the Korean resistance reaches its zenith in *Once Upon a Time*, in which his image is plastered on a billboard in the headquarters of some hapless resistance

fighters. During a fight scene in the nightclub which they run, a Japanese flag is ripped from the board to reveal successively a Korean flag, a building plan used in a failed assassination mission, the motto 'Liberated Korea Forever' in Hangul, and, finally, a portrait photograph of Kim Gu. The more senior of these resistance fighters salutes the picture before it is torn down. (Figures 1.5 – 1.8)





Figures 1.5-1.8: The flag sequence in *Once Upon A Time*

The otherwise nondescript ‘leadership’ of the resistance referred to by these characters is thus personified in the figure of Kim Gu. By linking Kim Gu and the signifier of the current South Korean state, *Once Upon a Time* presents the ideology of the resistance as a precursor of the current nation-state. More recently, Kim Gu’s brief appearance in the 2015 film *Assassination* follows that of his representation in *Once Upon A Time*. He is depicted as leading the Provisional Government of Korea in exile in Hangzhou in China. From here, he masterminds the operation that will drive the film’s narrative, the mission to assassinate key figures within mainland Korea. Taken together, these films

establish Kim Gu as the key resistance leader of the period, someone who worked to create a functioning government that could take control in the wake of liberation whilst also taking dramatic action to ensure that liberation came as soon as possible.

Why is it that Kim Gu should be granted such a prominent position in the mythology of the national resistance? I suggest that there are two key points that ensure his suitability for commemoration in the contemporary era. Firstly, beyond being a political leader, Kim had murdered a Japanese man and been sentenced to death. His rebellion was aggressive and emotional as well as intellectual, and he can therefore be more easily represented as a man of action. Secondly, another vital and well-known figure in the Provisional Government at this time, Syngman Rhee, would go on to become the Republic's first president. His legacy as a member of the resistance has come to be eclipsed by the memory of his autocratic rule. Kim, meanwhile, is remembered for his attendance at a summit in Pyongyang 1948 that sought to find a solution to national division before the formal declaration of two oppositional Korean states.¹⁰ In the current climate, in which unification is arguably viewed far more positively than the entrenched factionalism that defined the decades following the liberation, a period so closely associated with Syngman Rhee, Kim appears to have been more in touch with the ideals of contemporary South Korean society. In 2015, Gallup, a public polling company, asked South Koreans who came to mind when they thought about the anti-Japanese independence movement.¹¹ Kim Gu was the second most popular response (after Ahn Jung-geun) with 45% of respondents mentioning his name. Syngman Rhee, in contrast, was only mentioned by 2% of those questioned.¹² Tellingly, the more negative elements of Kim's character, including his

involvement in the assassination of a political rival following the liberation, are not remarked upon by the films in question.¹³ That these representations do not occur in isolation is a point worth noting, and they therefore circulate in the same cultural arena as other commemorations of his memory, such as the designation of his autobiography as ‘a cultural treasure’ by the South Korean government in 1997,¹⁴ and the 2007 proposal to have his face printed upon a banknote.¹⁵ Ultimately, Kim Gu’s name and image have come to symbolise the twin strands of Korean resistance, the political and the anarchic.

Ahn Jung-geun’s representation across this body of films is significantly different in that its focus is solely upon him as a figure of violent resistance, rather than part of the political process.¹⁶ On October 26th 1909, Ahn assassinated Itō Hirobumi, a former resident general of Korea and key figure in the annexation process. Ahn was arrested at the time and later executed. Two invocations of this event amongst contemporary South Korean films are relevant in this discussion, demonstrating as they do the ways in which acts of resistance are engaged with by nationalist rhetoric and become mythologised.

The first of these references occurs during *Once Upon a Time*. In a scene towards the beginning of the film, an agent of the Japanese police force in Korea beats a restrained suspect. It appears that the sole reason for the suspect’s arrest is that he shares a surname with Ahn Jung-geun, although he is revealed to belong to a different, unrelated branch of the family. The inspector is attempting to capture a masked criminal who has performed a burglary upon the home of the chief of the Japanese military police, leaving behind a piece of paper with a black handprint. The handprint indicates a shortened ring-finger, and is a duplicate of a print on a piece of calligraphy produced by Ahn whilst under arrest.¹⁷ Ahn had mutilated his own finger as part of a pledge to fight

against Japan, thus the thief, and by extension, the suspect, are linked to the Korean resistance. During the 'interrogation', the suspect refers to *Dr Ahn Jung-geun*, to which the police officer takes exception. 'He's no doctor', he replies, 'he's a violent terrorist and murderer'. These two characters represent opposing sides in the ideological divide. For the abused and incarcerated Korean citizen, Ahn is a heroic symbol of resistance, whereas to the forces of colonial power, he, and those like him, are dangerous and threatening. The inequality of the power relations between these two figures, plus the absurdity and brutality of the police officer's line of questioning ensures that the audience is far more likely to align themselves with the suspect, and his view of history, than with the figure personifying colonial oppression.

More intriguing is the role that Ahn plays in the often-convoluted narrative of *2009: Lost Memories*. The film's central conceit is that following the destruction wrought to Japan during the Second World War, Japanese agents discovered a way to travel through time. By preventing the assassination of Itō Hirobumi by killing Ahn Jung-geun before he is able to act, an alternate timeline is set in motion which sees Japan allying itself with the United States in the war and thus avoiding the catastrophic implications that defeat entailed. As such, Japan never lost control of its Korean colony, and in the present day, 2009, the Korean peninsula is an integral part of the Japanese nation. Whilst Ahn is only very briefly represented on screen, his actions serve as the linchpin of the film's narrative structure. In ascribing such importance to the assassination of Itō, the film also manages to suggest that the nation's eventual liberation from Japanese rule would not have taken place had Ahn not acted. He is therefore, albeit indirectly, responsible for the salvation of the Korean people. By elevating the importance of this action, the filmmakers have attempted to integrate the

history of Korean resistance into the narrative of liberation, one in which the Korean people have often found themselves little more than willing recipients.

The fall of the Japanese Empire came not as a result of internal colonial resistance, but because of the actions of the Allied military forces. More insulting still to Korean nationalist pride is that liberation was not even the primary objective of this conflict, instead the freedom of the Korean people was a side-effect of a far more wide-ranging conflict. Henry Krystal states that 'survivors of the Holocaust still suffer from a feeling of shame over the idea that they did not fight back enough'. As a result, 'renewed effort is being made to create a mythology about the heroic resistance, which is intended to stop the shame', a process not limited to those who experienced such tragedies first hand.¹⁸ A similar process may clearly be seen to be at work in contemporary South Korean cinema. Genuine, historical acts of resistance, such as those performed by Empress Myeongseong and Emperor Gojong, which lead to their respected murder and forced abdication, are recreated and renewed through cinematic representation. Likewise, a process of amplification can occur, so that the significance of the Korean resistance may be over-emphasised. Finally in this progression, we can observe what might be termed a full mythologisation, in which fictional resistance figures are constructed by the films in question in order to provide a sense of agency for the Korean people and a counter to the shame associated with collaboration.

Whilst there are a number of films which have placed a fictional resistance fighter within a recognised historical context, the characterisation of these figures varies greatly. However, despite huge differences in tone, we might view the anarchist terrorist group depicted in *The Anarchists* as performing the same function as the bumbling pair of slapstick revolutionaries

from *Once Upon A Time*. These differences in tone become more marked as one looks through a chronological list of the South Korean Colonial historical films. Over the course of sixteen years, there is a discernible shift in the representation of fictional resistance characters from the melodramatic and tragic to the comedic and inept, as if the resistance myth begins to collapse under the weight of its own nationalist pretensions. However, the releases of *Assassination* in 2015, and *Age of Shadows* the following year mark a return to the representational characteristics of the earlier films, albeit within a much more stylised, blockbuster aesthetic.

Films such as *The Anarchists*, *Blue Swallow* and *Modern Boy* all depict Koreans taking arms against the Japanese, spurred on by nationalist ideologies and the injustices they and their compatriots have suffered, with ultimately tragic results. Viewed together this trio of films serves as a form of national wish-fulfilment, in which the Japanese occupation is met with forceful resistance across the entirety of its duration, at home and abroad. *The Anarchists* concludes with a daring attack by the surviving members of the anarchist gang against a ship filled with the Japanese elite. Despite some considerable skill, the group is outmatched by the Japanese military, ensuring that they all (barring the chief protagonist, who missed the attack) die without completing their mission. In *Blue Swallow*, a fictionalised biopic of Park Kyung-won, one of Korea's first female aviators, Park witnesses a man she assumed to be a journalist assassinate a number of high profile Japanese figures before turning his gun on himself. The journalist's actions not only cause the end of his own life, but lead to the imprisonment and torture of Park and the execution of her lover. Finally in this tragic trinity, *Modern Boy* concludes with the hero having to

watch helplessly as the woman he loves walks onto a stage of Japanese officials and detonates the bomb woven into her jacket.

The tragic tendency amongst these texts is perhaps the inevitable result of the filmmakers' endeavours to integrate resistance mythology into a period in which such actions were few and far between. Characters who work towards the liberation in these films are doomed to failure by the inescapable conclusions of history, yet they serve the same function as the recreations of real-life historical figures discussed above. In presenting Korean nationalism thriving among some citizens in these darkest of times, the films argue that the Japanese occupation failed to colonise the minds of its new subjects, and thus was doomed to failure. Grand narratives of assimilation and unity are torn apart by the bullets of *The Anarchists*, or an exploding jacket, perfectly tailored to fit a *Modern Boy*.

One might expect, when looking at a national cinema, to find films valorising the actions of those who stood up for the nation's ideals in the face of foreign aggression, such as those discussed above. More surprising however is that amongst the brave, noble and self-sacrificing resistance fighters portrayed in the colonial historical film lurks a far less conventional figure in whom to invest national pride: the hapless fool. *Radio Dayz*, *Once Upon A Time* and *Dachimawa Lee* stand in contrast to the melancholic seriousness of a film such as *Blue Swallow* by presenting their heroes as increasingly hopeless, disorganised and inept. These films provide numerous examples of such behaviour, of which the following three instances serve to demonstrate the tone. In *Radio Dayz*, the resistance group seizes a mail van in order to disrupt Japanese communications, but can't decide whether or not letters from Koreans to Japanese, or vice-versa, should be intercepted. Ultimately, unable to quite

work out all the complexities of the scheme, they give up. *Once Upon A Time* features a scene in which a character is supposed to throw a switch on a circuit breaker at a pivotal moment, extinguishing the lights and allowing his accomplice to assassinate the Japanese governor. He can't work out which switch to throw, and in alternating a number of different levers foils the assassination attempt and causes an electrical fire. *Dachimawa Lee*, a film which owes a strong debt to *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (Jay Roach, 1997) in its depiction of a group of Korean secret agents, features these elite spies getting their hair caught in aeroplane propellers, hanging from wildly rotating signs or armed solely with a portable bidet.

This approach to portraying the resistance fighter, whilst incredibly different in tone from the more tragic and dramatic features, is not altogether different in kind. Both representative techniques manage to reconcile the contradictions inherent in attempting to present narratives of historical resistance to an audience that knows that the Korean resistance movement was ultimately unsuccessful. If resistance demands the sacrifice of those devoted to the cause, the movement is unlikely to gain the momentum required to topple the oppressors. Likewise, if successful missions are presented as more the consequence of good luck than good judgement, one can understand how these fools never overthrew the Japanese.

It is not unthinkable to read the absurdist and farcical nature of the resistance activities portrayed in these films as more than merely the conventions of the comedy genre to which they all, in part, adhere, but as containing a strand of political critique. By equating the nationalist agenda with such inept, comedic and ridiculous characters, their agenda begins to appear equally ridiculous. Instead of speaking solely as to the virtues of nationalism in

colonial Korea, these films must also be viewed in the context of their contemporary production. These three films, all released in 2008, are not only informed by the nationalism that marked the country during the military dictatorships alongside the intense politicisation of popular culture that characterised the 1980s and 90s, but also emerge at a time in which the nation's government was shifting from a period of liberal control to a new era of conservatism, heralded by the election of Lee Myung-bak at the end of 2007. In this context, the pointedly a-political behaviour of protagonists with whom the audience is intended to identify, such as Lloyd in *Radio Dayz* or Haruko in *Once Upon A Time*, may point more towards the desire of the filmmakers not to equate them with contemporary political Conservatism than to reflect the politics of the colonial period.

In spite of their less-than-wholly-serious take on the colonial period, these films are responsible, as much as any others discussed above, for shaping their audiences' understanding and opinion of Korea's colonial past. All of these texts participate in the construction and perpetuation of a national resistance mythology which attempts to mine stirring narratives from the bleakest resources. Ultimately, resistance narratives serve as a riposte to the ideology and rhetoric of colonialism, giving voice to Korean subjectivity and allowing for the perpetuation of Korean culture in a period of enforced assimilation. At the beginning of this section I pointed to similarities between the mythologies of resistance mobilised within France and South Korea, and in closing wish to highlight how these colonial comedies likewise evoke the narrative of 'la Résistance'. The slapstick nature of the Korean resistance as portrayed in *Radio Dayz*, *Once Upon A Time* and *Dachimawa Lee* evokes

nothing so much, for this British spectator at least, as one of the French Résistance's most iconic screen appearances, *'Allo 'Allo* (1982-1992).

The Villainous Japanese

As I have demonstrated, contemporary South Korean colonial historical films have turned to figures of nationalist resistance to construct cinematic heroes. Heroism, however, cannot emerge in a vacuum: instead it is the result of conflict and adversary. It is not enough therefore for a filmmaker merely to create heroic characters, but the narrative must place them in conflict with an antagonist. Given that across this body of historical films the audience is consistently aligned with Korean nationalist figures, it is almost unavoidable that agents of Japanese colonial power should necessarily fill these antagonistic roles. The opposition provided by these Japanese figures extends beyond simple displays of military aggression, although this is a significant aspect of the representation of Japanese characters across the wider body of films, and could be described as comprising a variety of actions that would fall under the rubric of 'hard power' as coined by Joseph Nye.¹⁹ According to Nye's schema, 'power' is comprised of three constituent aspects, hard, economic (a subcategory of hard), and soft. Defining power as 'the ability to influence the behaviour of others to get the outcome one wants', hard power is dependent upon compelling an agent to act according to your wishes through force, coercion or bribery, the so-called 'carrot and stick' approach, whereas soft power relies upon the attraction of shared values to co-opt others.²⁰ The form of colonialism as practiced by Japan in Korea is therefore exemplary of hard power, and contemporary cinema has revelled in portraying the myriad 'sticks' that the coloniser utilised to consolidate their control over the peninsula.

This is not to argue that contemporary South Korean cinema has depicted the Japanese as exerting power solely through aggressive acts. Whilst military power is an oft-resorted to way of dealing with the Korean populace at moments of crisis, it is the colonial administrators who are responsible for the day-to-day implementation of Japanese policy. This control covered all areas of life in colonial Korea, including the cultural, municipal and economic spheres, three areas covered by the films under examination. The first of these is explored in *Radio Dayz*, in which a fledgling Korean-language radio station has to contend with the wishes of its Japanese director. This director threatens the team working at the station with the loss of their jobs (and eventually with arrest) unless their popular radio serial is rewritten to include a substantial dose of imperial propaganda. Whilst propaganda would be associated with the mobilisation of soft power, *Radio Dayz* reveals that this material is only presented to the public through the use of threats and policies of coercion.

The hero of *Modern Boy*, Lee Hae-Myeong, begins the film enamoured with the trappings of modernity which the Japanese occupation has bought to 1930s Gyeongseong. He is likewise employed in a suitably modern profession, as a town planner in the office of the Colonial Government. In her thesis upon the response of colonial Korean subjects to the changes made to the capital in the 1920s, Jane Song demonstrates how urban redevelopment was demonstrative of Japanese control over the peninsula.²¹ She describes how ancient buildings 'embodying two thousand years of Korean autonomy were replaced by new symbols of Japanese power', and how colonial Koreans were suddenly surrounded by imposing 'western-style' buildings and public places designed to 'instil in them a sense of civic morality and turn them into dutiful colonial subjects.'²² The opening shots of *Modern Boy* succinctly demonstrate

this approach to urban design. Following a long shot in which we are able to ascertain the extend of this new style of architecture upon the colonial city, we see a shot of the Governor General building (a colonial style building, now recreated by CGI due to its demolition, an incident discussed later in this thesis), followed by a shot of *Sungyemun*, a former gate to the city, built in a traditional Korean style, but now without its accompanying city walls and isolated in the centre of a traffic island. Finally in this establishing sequence we see Gyeongseong station, another building in the colonial style. Both through geography and editing, the new symbols of colonial power surround icons of Korean traditional culture. Like the education and cultural sectors, architecture and urban design was another area through which Japanese administrators could mould Korean subjectivities to fit their colonialist ideology. The reversal of this process, in which the post-colonial state demolished architectural remnants of the colonial period, is addressed in chapter four of this thesis.

In a fashion similar to *Modern Boy's* representation of the urban planning offices, the colonial section of *Enlightenment Film* depicts the father figure, on whom the film is focused, working for the Oriental Development Company (ODC). A prospectus for the company, dating from 1921, describes their work as 'promoting the economic and industrial growth' of Korea, an arrangement that was cemented by a treaty of 1908.²³ The ODC's role on the peninsula was to oversee banking, manage agriculture and industry and 'give facility to the settlers', who were émigrés from Japan.²⁴ Thus, alongside the colonial government itself, the ODC was one of the principal organisations active in transforming the Korean peninsula according to the design of Imperial Japan.

By depicting, however briefly, the levels of administration that govern life on the Korean peninsula and ensure that Japan's imperial designs are

implemented, *Radio Dayz*, *Modern Boy* and *Enlightenment Film* demonstrate how Japanese power was expressed by more than simply the physical control of the populace. This insidious yet overwhelming use of authority is portrayed, alongside those who wield it, as a fundamental facet of Japan's domination of the Korean peninsula.

Yet despite the clear impact that this form of colonial power had upon colonial Korean citizens, it is decidedly un-cinematic. Far more striking are the scenes, replayed in numerous iterations across contemporary films set in the colonial period, which pit Korean against Japanese in a battle, of wits or physicality. Be they engaged in a military action or the interrogation of a Korean suspect, Japanese officials are frequently depicted as vicious, brutal and unfeeling, which often results in the Japanese military, and its military police, being shown engaging in activities that might well be defined as military atrocities. Towards the end of *Once Upon A Time*, military policemen round up one hundred Koreans who have refused to adopt Japanese names. The leader of the occupation forces threatens to execute hundreds, even thousands, in order to lure out the diamond thief he is hunting. The execution itself is averted at the last moment by the radio broadcast that announced the Japanese surrender, but the prisoners depicted in *Gabi*, set nearly fifty years earlier, were not able to count on such a *deus-ex-machina*. In this scene, the Japanese military has captured a group of guerrilla fighters who had been stockpiling arms in a secluded mountain village. The prisoners are restrained and unarmed, and are therefore helpless to resist as the military commander begins shooting them one by one. This portrayal of the Japanese as merciless in combat extends even beyond the colonial period, into the alternate future imagined by *2009: Lost Memories*. When the Japanese Bureau of Investigation uncovers the

location in which the Korean independence terrorist faction is hiding, a SWAT team is dispatched. The Koreans are mown down in an excessive display of military force, consisting of a seemingly unending rain of machine gun bullets and a liberal application of rocket-propelled grenades. The entire assault is shot in slow motion and accompanied by a stirring musical score designed to emphasise the tragic nature of the events unfolding. Two sections of this action set-piece stand out in terms of the filmmaker's desire to position the audience against the Japanese forces. In the first of these, a wounded Korean partisan is pinned to the floor by the boot of a Japanese agent, who promptly shoots the rebel in the face. The emotional peak of the scene however comes when a young child is shot in the back and falls, dead, into the arms of the film's hero. The scene is edited to repeat the moment of the bullet's impact from two slightly different angles, lengthening the duration of this grotesque act in an attempt to increase its impact upon the audience.

These scenes share two consistent traits; the brutality of the Japanese characters and the disproportionate nature of their military response. The slightest symbol of Korean resistance is met with overwhelming force, not only towards the perpetrators of the initial act, but to all those in their community. It is not hard to trace the origin of this perception of the colonial forces to their response to The March 1st Uprising. As explained in the introduction, Japan violently attempted to quell the rebellion of their colonial subjects. Although there was an ensuing shift in Japan's colonial policy from an oppressive militaristic style towards a more relaxed and permissive atmosphere characterised as 'cultural rule' following the rebellion and clashes of this scale were never repeated, it is this image of the colonial forces that persists across contemporary films that look back to the colonial period.

The dichotomy established by colonial historical films between Japanese and Korean characters is crystallised in scenes depicting the interrogation and torture of Korean subjects by Japanese agents. In such scenes, the dynamic of colonial conflict is inscribed upon the bodies of two opposing characters, and their conflict serves as a microcosm of the wider colonial confrontation.

Following an explosion in the city planning office caused by a bomb hidden in his lunchbox, *Modern Boy*'s protagonist is interrogated by agents of the prosecutor's office. One of these agents rifles through a box of intimidating and predominantly sharp looking objects, eventually settling on a pair of secateurs with which he endeavours to prune Hae-myeong's earlobe. This element of the violence is obscured from the camera by the body of the interrogator, although the next scene creates shock in its own way, as the audience sees the always meticulously styled character looking decidedly unkempt in a torn and bloody shirt. Hae-myeong is then beaten by his best friend, the Japanese prosecutor, before being eventually released. This scene demonstrates not only how the Japanese act out of desperation, arresting and torturing an innocent man because of their inability to uncover the truth about the resistance's activities, but also how colonialism interferes with personal relationships. Outside of the interrogation room, Hae-myeong and Shinsuke, the prosecutor, are able to maintain their friendship, yet Shinsuke's duties dehumanise him. During the interrogation scene, Shinsuke is subsumed into the role assigned to him by the colonial government and becomes not a man, but merely an operative of the state.

The violence of interrogation which was obscured in *Modern Boy* is viscerally revealed in *Blue Swallow*. In response to the assassination discussed earlier, both Park Kyung-won and her lover, Han Ji-hyuk, are arrested. Scenes

of the two being questioned quickly give way to those of extreme torture. Han Ji-hyuk is shown naked and bloody, being waterboarded whilst pinned to the ground. Park is subjected to sleep deprivation and electrocution. In the most graphic scene, the camera shows, in close up, a blade being inserted into the tip of Han's finger, slowly prying off the fingernail whilst blood flows profusely. These scenes, whilst undoubtedly primarily deployed to emphasise the brutality of the Japanese, also manage to relate the colonial period to more contemporary concerns.²⁵ *Blue Swallow* was released at a time in which the methods of torture being depicted were a topic of intense public discussion. Although by no means a new method of interrogation, (its usage was first documented in the fourteenth century²⁶), waterboarding re-entered public consciousness following the invasion of Iraq and the detention of prisoners in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib. Prompted by the release of secret government memos, debate raged as to whether 'enhanced interrogation techniques' as they were termed by the contemporary United States administration, of which waterboarding was one such technique, constituted torture.²⁷ Interestingly, within the United States, opponents of the measure would point towards the conviction of a Japanese officer, Yukio Asano, with war crimes in 1947 for waterboarding a US citizen.²⁸ The inclusion of waterboarding within this sequence, alongside sleep deprivation, another interrogation technique which garnered criticism at this time, equates the actions of the Japanese with war crimes, as well as situating them within current debates about atrocity and the conduct of nations in times of war.

A less conventional reading of this scene would point out that while equating the Japanese with wartime atrocities, *Blue Swallow* also aligns the colonial Korean resistance movement, through their actions as an insurgent

rebellion, with contemporary Iraqis. Upon its release, the film was confronted by waves of negative criticism from those within South Korea who felt that the film glorified someone who had collaborated with the occupying forces and allowed herself to become a poster girl for the Japanese colonial project. The press also circulated rumours that the real-life Park had been involved with a Japanese politician named Koizumi, the grandfather of the former Japanese Prime Minister.²⁹ In attempting to sidestep the issue of collaboration within the film, as well as including these fictional torture scenes, *Blue Swallow* endeavours to circumvent questions relating to Park's nationalism or patriotism. The comparison between colonial Korea and contemporary Iraq posited by the film begs an interesting question of its audience. How can a nation justify valorising the acts of Korean independence fighters who committed assassinations and acts of terrorism against the Japanese, whilst simultaneously deploying over 3,600 troops (the third largest contingent after the United States and Great Britain) to Iraq?³⁰ Surely such an action places Korean soldiers in a position similar to that of the Japanese forces during their colonial occupation.

The images of torture which emerged from Abu Ghraib have been recycled in a wave of films, emerging first in America and later across the globe, that have been described as 'Torture Porn', a term originated by the American critic David Edelstein.³¹ In an article calling for the use of the less pejorative term 'spectacle horror', Adam Lowenstein illustrates how one of the most controversial films in this emergent trend, Eli Roth's *Hostel* (2005), channels its spectators to 'feel history' through the use of grotesque spectacle.³² Whilst never going to the same extremes as Roth's film, the violence and brutality of the Japanese officials displayed in *Modern Boy* and *Blue Swallow* aims to elicit a similar, visceral response from its audience, forcing them to feel what it

means to be a subordinate, colonised citizen. These films utilise imagery that in the past decade has become associated with both the injustices of contemporary global politics and a new form of extreme horror cinema. Yet they are not alone in utilising the imagery of the horror film or the idea of monstrosity in order to present a Korean audience with Japanese characters who border on the inhuman.



Figure 1.9: Kato as the villainous figure of Japanese aggression in
Fighter In The Wind

In one sequence towards the beginning of *Fighter in the Wind*, the hero, Choi Bae-dal is tied to a post alongside a group of other Koreans, all about to be executed by the Japanese for refusing to undertake Kamikaze missions. The Japanese commander Kato promises to spare their lives, as long as Bae-dal fights him. Their fight takes place whilst the military base around them suffers the bombardment of an American air strike. Lit by the flames of the assault, with a cold and merciless expression, Kato fights with almost supernatural speed and strength. (Figure 1.9) Despite being struck in the face by a rock, Kato does not bleed or appear in the slightest bit wounded. On the contrary, he responds

with such a ferocious assault that the sequence is shot with an undercranking/step printing technique, in order to allow the audience to fully capture the speed of Bae-dal's opponent. These attributes combine to make Kato appear more like a figure from horror cinema, the vampire or the seemingly invulnerable antagonist of a slasher film, rather than merely a Japanese soldier.³³

In terms of presenting the Japanese as perverse and grotesque however, no contemporary South Korean film can compete with *Private Eye*. In the film, the titular detective uncovers a criminal network trafficking opium and organising child prostitution in the early colonial period. This organisation has had the assistance of the colonial police force and involves a number of prominent Japanese figures, up to and including the governor himself, intended to represent the highest figure of Japanese authority at that time. Paedophilia and narcotics are potent symbols with which to invoke the moral condemnation of an audience, but beyond their function of ensuring that Governor Murata emerges as a wholly unsympathetic character, they also serve an allegorical function. Following Murata's arrest, the detective is read a newspaper article which claims that without his actions Korea would have witnessed an 'all-out opium war'. This reference to opium wars invokes the conflict between China and the British (and later other foreign powers) in the mid nineteenth century, an example of colonial aggression which led to the imposition of unequal treaties. The suggestion here is that Japan, having developed its imperial designs following its own encounter with Western empires, might pursue a similar strategy as that utilised by the British in order to subjugate Korea. Likewise, the scene of intended sexual assault is metaphorical for Japanese colonial desire. In the scene of foiled seduction

towards the end of the film, the Japanese Governor Murata is shown desiring the young Korean girl, who has been dressed in a kimono and has make-up designed to resemble a geisha. Through policies of colonisation and assimilation Japan has seized and transformed the object that it desires, namely Korea. The scenario established by the film, foiled within the fictional narrative but arguably enacted in history (in the case of the comfort women), depicts colonisation as the rape of Korea for the pleasure of Japan. The spectre of the rape of Korean women by Japanese men raised by *Private Eye* is highly controversial and is an issue that haunts both nations to this day. This example demonstrates the fine line between representation and suggestion walked by many of the contemporary colonial historical films, and raises questions about how, or indeed if, such traumatic incidents, such as those suffered by the 'comfort women' can ever be adequately represented by cinema.

The Limits of Representation

The Comfort Women

All the films discussed thus far have used direct forms of representation in order to reinforce a binary opposition between Korean and Japanese figures. Korean figures, be they royalty or resistance, have been positioned as heroes who have stood up for the ideals of Korean nationalism and have attempted to ensure the perpetuation of Korean culture in the face of Japanese colonisation. In contrast, through their opposition of these positive characters, Japanese figures have been positioned as antagonists. Films such as *Blue Swallow* and *Private Eye* have emphasised and magnified the brutal and monstrous aspects of these characters in order to engender revulsion and opposition in their audiences.

Given that these films deal with an historical context that existed outside of their filmic worlds, their depiction of the horrors of colonisation intersects with the horrors committed against real historical agents. What is at stake when filmmakers undertake the representation, and fictionalisation, of incidents of historical trauma?

A great deal of debate within the nebulous field of trauma studies, especially within branches emerging from research within the humanities, has concerned the ability of an individual, within any medium, to be able to 'represent' trauma. In this context, trauma, originally meaning a wound inflicted upon the body, is understood to refer to a wound inflicted upon the mind.³⁴ Laurie Vickroy defines trauma 'as a response to events so overwhelmingly intense that they impair normal emotional or cognitive responses and bring lasting psychological disruption'.³⁵ The psychological disruption following the experience of a traumatic incident has been termed Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a diagnosis which posits that the sufferer's mind has become 'split or dissociated' and is unable to 'correctly register the wound to the psyche because the ordinary mechanisms of awareness and cognition are destroyed'.³⁶ As such, the individual is unable to integrate the event into their normal consciousness, meaning that the traumatic incident is inaccessible to the standard processes of memory and instead recurs unbidden, through flashbacks, nightmares or other such forms of traumatic memory.³⁷

While the notion of trauma and PTSD is inherently tied to the psychology of an individual, much work has been done to examine the ways in which trauma may be registered on a societal level. Neil J. Smelser proposes the framework of 'cultural trauma', which he defines as

a memory accepted and publicly given credence by a relevant membership group and evoking an event or situation which is a) laden with negative affect, b) represented as indelible, and c) regarded as threatening a society's existence or violating one or more of its fundamental cultural presuppositions.³⁸

This characterisation of a cultural trauma intersects with that of a 'limit event', described by Simone Gigliotti as 'an event or practice of such magnitude and profound violence that its effects rupture the otherwise normative foundations' of a community.³⁹ Following these definitions, the Japanese colonisation of Korea, as experienced by the Korean people, would appear to be exemplary of a cultural trauma or limit event. The replacement of a number of attributes of traditional Korean life with Japanese counterparts ensured that the society's ability to perpetuate itself was placed in jeopardy, and that existing cultural and social practices and structures were either wholly eradicated or severely threatened.

Yet an event, or series of events, are not in and of themselves traumatic, but become so in combination with the context under which the event occurs and the way in which it is remembered and experienced by its victim(s). A traumatic event should not be 'conceived so much as a discrete casual event' but more 'as a part of a process-in-system', according to Smelser.⁴⁰ Part of this system is dependent upon the event in question being remembered by the society at large, and it is this process of remembrance that places the trauma in the cultural arena. As Jeffrey C. Alexander proclaims, 'for traumas to emerge at the level of the collectivity, social crises must become cultural crises. Events are one thing, representations of these events are quite another'.⁴¹ It is therefore at the level of these representations that incidents may become transformed, from

merely unfortunate or catastrophic events, into a bona-fide cultural trauma, an event which resonates through the ages, ensuring that a society may never again be what it once was.

The criteria, that for an incident to be considered a cultural trauma it must be articulated, is at odds with many evocations of traumatic events as 'unspeakable'. Not only is the memory of the event, as described previously, inaccessible to an individual's consciousness and is therefore unrecountable, but witnesses may struggle to find words adequate to describe the full atrocity of what they have experienced. The witness testimonies and memoirs which emerged following the Holocaust, the twentieth century's definitive limit event, raise questions as to how a survivor might put into words an experience that empties language of meaning, through their recourse to phrases such as 'unspeakable', 'inexplicable' and 'incomprehensible'.⁴² Evidence of this inability to adequately articulate the extent of trauma may be found in a small number of contemporary South Korean films set in the colonial period, in relation to the issue of the 'comfort women'. Comfort women were young women forced into offering sexual services to Japanese troops before and during the Second World War. Estimates of the number of women forced into such slavery vary between 50,000 and 200,000, and it is believed that most were Korean.⁴³ Alongside the Dokdo island issue⁴⁴, the question over Japanese responsibility for, and the payment of compensation to, Korean comfort women has been one of the most visible political aspects of the two nations' postcolonial tension. On a weekly basis since January 1992, large demonstrations have been held outside the Japanese embassy in Seoul demanding that reparations be made and that the Japanese government issues a formal apology.⁴⁵ These demonstrations converge around the statue of a young girl in traditional Korean

dress, one of 39 such statues across South Korea that constitute a visible memorialisation of the trauma suffered by these women, and whose existence continues to strain the diplomatic ties between Japan and Korea.⁴⁶ Yet for all of its visibility in the contemporary public political sphere, the comfort women issue was for a great period of time almost entirely ignored by contemporary South Korean fiction cinema.⁴⁷ Bearing in mind our understanding of how trauma breaks down the traditional relationships between event and its representation, it should be no surprise that whilst the spectre of the 'Comfort Woman' has not been focused upon within the diegesis of these fiction films, her presence is apparent through allegorical allusion and symbolism.

I have previously discussed how *Private Eye* sets up the scene of a powerful Japanese character intending to rape a helpless Korean girl, and illustrated how this may be read as a metaphor for both the issue of the comfort women and the Japanese colonial project as a whole. This dynamic is articulated even more subtly and strikingly in a rapid series of shots from an early sequence in *Fighter In The Wind*. It is 1939 in the colonial capital and a crowd has gathered to watch a boxing match. A Japanese military plane flies over the area, framed against a foreground of flags, dropping propaganda leaflets aimed at recruiting new fighter pilots. As the plane flies over, it creates a gust of wind that raises the skirt section of a young woman's traditional Korean *hanbok*, causing her to scream. (Figures 1.10 – 1.13)



Figure 1.10: A Plane flies above, foregrounded by flags.



Figure 1.11: The audience watches the plane fly overhead.



Figure 1.12: The plane lifts the skirt of a young woman



Figure 1.13: The woman assaulted by a Japanese aeroplane (Figures 1.10-1.13
from *Fighter In The Wind*)

Despite this sequence lasting merely a few seconds, those familiar with the comfort women issue will readily notice its significance: a symbol of the Japanese military assaults the virtue of a woman who serves as emblematic of traditional Korean femininity. Whilst this scene has no narrative significance, and the young woman is never seen again in the course of *Fighter In The Wind*, it is a key moment in understanding the ways in which the traumatic aspects of a nation's past may haunt its cinematic present. I suggest that this section serves as an allegorical traumatic flashback, allowing the filmmaker to gesture towards an issue that might prove too controversial to address directly in the context of a commercial martial arts film. This is far from the only example one might think of in which the spectre of the comfort women has loomed over contemporary cinema in ways which may not be immediately apparent. In this thesis' fourth chapter, I will demonstrate how a spectral perspective, for want of a better term, allows us to read *The Silenced* as speaking to the same issues mentioned here.

In the past few years the 'Comfort Women Issue' has once again been raised to the forefront of the diplomatic relationship between Japan and South Korea. On December 28th 2015 an agreement was reached between the governments of Japan and South Korea that was intended to resolve 'finally and irreversibly' the issue between the two nations. In return for a formal diplomatic apology and the establishment of a foundation, paid for by the Japanese and administered by the ROK government to aid the former comfort women, the South Korean government agreed to take measures to resolve the dispute over the comfort woman statue in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, as well as to refrain from using the comfort women issue to criticise Japan within the international community.⁴⁸ This deal faced criticism from within both nations, (as

well as from a United Nations committee concerned with discrimination against women⁴⁹), and as Ankit Panda has pointed out, it is impossible for a Government to declare an issue 'finally and irreversibly' resolved without public support.⁵⁰

Emerging into this arena and demonstrating that this situation is far from resolved is *Spirit's Homecoming*, a film whose production was crowd-funded with support from more than 75,000 people.⁵¹ A highly emotive retelling of the experiences of a girl abducted and forced into sexual slavery, the film uses a dual-timeframe structure in order to depict the horrors of her life during the colonial period and her inability to escape this trauma into the present day. By unflinchingly depicting the sexual abuse suffered by the comfort women, the film visually represents what *Fighter in the Wind* and *Private Eye* expressed only through subtext. The film refuses to shy away from the violence and horror experienced by the women, and in one key scene presents an extended take in which we look down from above at a cross-section of the sex station where these women are being held. As the camera tracks across the building, each room becomes an individual vignette of the violence and brutality of their lives. Whilst much of the sexual violence experienced by the comfort women occurs off-screen, the actions and repercussions of physical violence abound. Over the course of the film the protagonists become increasingly beaten and broken, and during a scene in which some of their fellow captives bathe we see their flesh marred with a vast array of lacerations and contusions. These scenes take instances of historical abuse and inscribe them onto the screen in a way designed to elicit an emotional reaction, breaking away at the boundaries we place between history and ourselves.

Director Cho Chung-rae is well aware of the political arena in which his film circulates. The production notes for the film declares that ‘Unlike Germany, modern day Japan government (sic) has not made amends for their war crimes of the past’, going on to blame the ‘Rightist faction’ of the Japanese government for denying historic war crimes.⁵² While this statement and the historical sections of *Spirit's Homecoming* serve as a demonization of the actions of the Japanese military during the colonial period and the reluctance of ensuing Japanese governments to address the atrocities committed during this period, its contemporary scenes act as a critique of the way in which South Korean society has sought to deal with this issue. In one scene, an elderly woman, Kim Young-hee, goes to the local municipal office in order to register as a former comfort woman. She is unable to confess at the key moment, and overhears a discussion between two officials which reveals the stigma with which these women are viewed. Later scenes of Young-hee show that she has always been reluctant to talk about her past, but the film suggests that it is through breaking her silence that she may find respite. That her release might ultimately come through confession is foreshadowed in an earlier scene in the film in which Young-hee is watching the testimony of Kim Hak-sun on TV, the first woman to publicly come forward to confess her experiences of sexual slavery at the hands of the Japanese military. The act of victim's testimony is thus foregrounded.

Ultimately Young-hee is able to achieve a cathartic release from the traumas of her history, but it comes not from diplomatic efforts or financial reparations, but through a shamanic ritual. In the film's denouement, the audience finally learns what happened to the young Young-hee and her friend Jung-min, who the historical sections of the film have followed. During the ritual, a young shaman takes on the role of Jung-min, allowing, or forcing perhaps,

Young-hee to relive their final moments together. We experience the death of Jung-min across two separate timeframes; in one instance experiencing history first-hand, and in the other we see the elderly Young-hee reliving her past through the shaman. It is this unfolding of the past into the present that finally allows Young-hee to speak to the sorrow she has carried with her throughout her adult life. *Spirit's Homecoming* ends with the shaman performing the eponymous ritual, followed by a scene in which we see the spirit of Jung-min return to the bucolic idyll of her hometown to be welcomed back by her parents. It is by turning to the past, the film suggests, rather than seeking to move beyond it, that we might address the horrors of that past and finally find peace. This is a message that I argue is expressed across a great many of the films discussed in this thesis, and is the key theme of my analysis. In relation to *Spirit's Homecoming*, I will return to this concept in chapter three, showing how Korean folk culture is utilised by the film to enhance this same message.

An Anti-mimetic Trauma Cinema

Across the examples presented above it is clear that contemporary South Korean filmmakers have been able to confront traumatic aspects of the colonial period within a mainstream popular cinema. If we understand the Japanese occupation of Korea as representing a traumatic event for the Korean people, I propose that this assembled collective of filmmakers has utilised a process of fictionalisation as a way of combatting the 'unspeakability' of trauma. In doing so they have provided a way for their audiences to access such traumatic memories, and as a result, move towards a lessening of their negative effects.

In order to examine this suggestion, it is necessary that we approach trauma theory from a different direction than that which has dominated its study

across the humanities, a movement which has been defined by the writings of Cathy Caruth, drawing upon the experiments of Bessel van der Kolk. As Ruth Leys has illustrated in her highly detailed study of the understanding of trauma through the modern era, the concept of trauma has constantly shifted between two opposing paradigms, namely the *mimetic*, and *anti-mimetic* theories.⁵³ The first of these posits that a traumatic event is of such an extremity as to 'shatter the victim's cognitive and perceptual capacities' in such a way as to ensure that the experience never becomes part of the memory system. This is the model pursued by Caruth when she undertakes 'a rethinking of reference',⁵⁴ in which the traumatic incident is imprinted 'literally' into the subject's mind beyond the reach of conscious understanding, and is therefore 'unsymbolizable and unrepresentable'.⁵⁵ The literalness of the traumatic memory is an important aspect of this theory, as it decrees that the traumatic recurrence is a perfect reproduction of an event that actually happened, unmediated by the victim's consciousness. In contrast, the anti-mimetic theory argues that trauma is an external event which impacts a fully constituted subject and, whatever the later damage to the victim's psyche, 'there is in principle no problem of eventually remembering or otherwise recovering the event'.⁵⁶ Traumatic memory is processed differently than other memories to be sure, but the traumatic incident has been processed and therefore is both non-literal and potentially recoverable. Hypnosis has played a fundamental role in both approaches, although each ascribes to different theorisations as to the access to traumatic memory provided by this technique. The mimetic approach originated with Jean-Marie Charcot's suggestion that the actions his patients performed under hypnosis were reproductions of traumatic scenes.⁵⁷ Trauma is believed to be 'encoded in the brain in a different way from normal memory', and the subject's

amnesia towards this memory is taken to be akin to post-hypnotic forgetting.⁵⁸

Hypnosis is therefore utilised as a method to access this inaccessible section of memory, which the patient almost mechanically reproduces. An anti-mimetic approach to trauma suggests that hypnosis may allow an individual access to this traumatic incident from the perspective of a spectator, and can therefore represent the event to his/herself and others.⁵⁹ The difference in theoretical approaches here can be simplified as a consideration of narrative positioning, either that of first or third person.

In this analysis of contemporary South Korean cinema, the mimetic tendency within trauma theory is of little value. The films under examination in this chapter do not hide the fact that they are fictional narratives, and while they may draw upon real historical characters to varying extents, they are incompatible with a literal inscription of historical fact that would fit the mimetic model. Likewise, the temporal distance between the traumatic incidents depicted by these films and their cinematic representations, which in this example is generational, runs contrary to a mimetic approach constructed around individuals who have first-hand experience of the traumatic incident and upon whom the incident is immediately inscribed. I have wider reservations as to the mimetic principle espoused by Caruth, which I have detailed in the introductory chapter. Yet the anti-mimetic approach, I suggest, alongside the postulations of trauma theory more generally, provides a highly useful model through which to examine the emergence of this body of contemporary South Korean films which attempt to represent the colonial period.

Pierre Janet distinguished two different types of memory, 'traumatic memory' and 'narrative memory', and argued that the goal of therapy was to convert the former into the latter by getting the patient to consciously recount

their history.⁶⁰ A fundamental aspect of traumatic memory is its latency, that is a period of time immediately following the event in which 'the effects of the experience are not apparent'.⁶¹ As Mark Morris points out, it is only in recent years that South Korean cinema has had the freedom to address its colonial past.⁶² In the years during which Korea was ruled by 'US-backed dictators', the nation's 'military, bureaucratic and business elite' were far too compromised by involvement with Japan to allow filmmakers to openly explore the topic.⁶³ It is only in the post-democratisation era, in which South Korean cinema has enjoyed phenomenal domestic success, that this topic has been resurrected into the cinematic consciousness.

The cinematic recurrence of the colonial period can be read not only as the appearance of a culturally 'forgotten' memory, akin to a traumatic remembrance, but also as part of a treatment for the very same traumatic condition. By narrativising the colonial period as a historical context for recognisable, genre-based scenarios, these films provide an avenue for Korean history to be integrated into the collective consciousness. This corresponds to Janet's schema therefore, in which, following a period of latency during which the impact of the colonial period was not apparent within the cinematic realm, contemporary South Korean cinema has recounted aspects of the national history with the effect of transitioning recollections of the colonial period into the domain of narrative memory from the realm of the traumatic.

The appearance of the colonial period in South Korean cinema can be viewed as operating in a similar fashion to the emergence of the 'February 28th Incident' as an element of Taiwanese literature and cinema.⁶⁴ Writing about these latter texts, Margaret Hillenbrand has described literature as 'functioning like archaeology with its painstaking uncovering of a lost past'.⁶⁵ Literature, in

this instance, may act as a 'valuable conduit through which readers can acquire knowledge about [their] history'.⁶⁶ The important comparison here is that, like the colonial period in South Korea, the February 28th Incident was not 'lost' or 'forgotten', but instead was an event whose traces were deliberately concealed for political reasons.⁶⁷ With the loosening of these political pressures by the passage of time, South Korean cinema has acted as an arena through which the colonial period might once again be reintegrated into the cultural consciousness.⁶⁸

Alongside a conscious understanding of the event that caused the original trauma, many physicians have been concerned with recreating the emotional impact of the original traumatic event in order to achieve a sense of catharsis. The psychiatrist William Sargant, who had been working with soldiers traumatised by their experiences in the battlefields of the Second World War, had developed treatments which attempted to achieve this abreaction in his patients through a combination of narcotics and the acting out of the traumatic event in the present tense.⁶⁹ In 1944 he discovered that the emotional excitement aroused by his treatments was more important in curing the patient than the revival of their originary trauma.⁷⁰ As a result, Sargant went on to claim that 'the abreaction of false memories might be more effective than the abreaction of real memories in achieving therapeutic success'.⁷¹

If we acknowledge Sargant's conclusions, then the representational strategies conducted by the films discussed above serve perfectly as a method to produce a cultural abreaction. During the course of the film, the audience member is immersed into the narrative unfolding before them (narcotic consumption optional), which, despite its historical setting, is enacted for them in the present tense. By presenting the Korean characters as heroic and sharing

the same supposed values as their audience, the film encourages the spectators to identify emotionally with these characters. The often-overwrought villainy and brutality of the Japanese figures only serves to further strengthen this identification. Therefore, the somewhat melodramatic and tragic endings of films such as *Blue Swallow*, *Modern Boy* and *The Sword With No Name* are perfectly designed to elicit the maximum amount of emotional response from their audiences. As a result, the audience, like Sargant's patients, are able to integrate a traumatic past into their conscious memory, whilst at the same time experiencing the catharsis of the release of the emotions associated with such an event, from the safety of their cinema seats.

Illuminating Korea's Dark Days

This chapter has illustrated how a range of figures key to the cultural understanding of Korea's colonial experience have been represented on screen. I have argued that representations of King Gojong and Queen Min, real-life figures from the Joseon dynasty, have been moulded to prioritise elements of their biography where they stood contrary to Japanese colonial designs. They have achieved iconographic status as figures who represented Korea's attempt to maintain its sovereignty. Likewise, Kim Gu and Ahn Joon-geun, two historical figures in the anti-Japanese resistance, have been repeatedly invoked by contemporary cinema, their actions being granted ever greater levels of significance. Alongside the representation of figures who lived through the era of Japanese colonialism, there has been a concurrent surge in more fictitious narratives set within this time-period. Although there have been two dominant strategies for depicting fictional resistance fighters (the melodramatic and the comedic), I have argued that they both serve similar functions; to speak to the

perpetuation of nationalist spirit in spite of the repressive actions of the Japanese, and to provide Korean's some agency in a period in which this was hard for colonial subjects to come by. Finally, I have explored how some characters, such as comfort women, may be present in these filmic evocations of the past without necessarily being depicted on screen. Theorisations of how trauma is processed and treated, I argue, allow us to view the representations discussed above as engaging in the traumatic healing process.

The depictions of colonial Korean characters discussed in this chapter, as figures of resistance or as victims of brutal Japanese oppression, do little to challenge the prevailing viewpoint that the colonial period was a dark time for the Korean people. Given the attempted desecration of their national culture and the obliteration of their sovereignty, it is perhaps no surprise that contemporary filmmakers have reacted with animosity towards Japan, illustrating how wounds inflicted in the past may leave a contemporary scar. However, these representations are not the only ones that have emerged in depictions of the colonial period. The following chapter will illustrate how, alongside the aforementioned portrayals of brutality and depravity, the colonial period has emerged as the nexus at which traditional Korean culture intersected with modernity, and how contemporary South Korean films have celebrated the excitement and transformative potential that this interaction promised.

Chapter 2

Colonial Ambivalence or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Modernity

In contrast to the previous chapter, which demonstrated the ways in which contemporary South Korean films set during the nation's colonial period have emphasised the traumatic and horrific nature of this historical period, this chapter takes a different perspective, arguing that many of these recent films have come to present a more ambivalent and nuanced view of this divisive moment in Korea's past. Whilst not ignoring the traumatic nature of the Japanese occupation, there are a number of films, including many of those which were discussed in the previous chapter, that have managed to highlight positive or glamorous aspects of Korea's colonial experience. By drawing attention to the ways in which this period combined the potential for brutality and oppression with the opportunity for advancement and transformation, these films have created an air of ambivalence in their historical depictions.

Much of this ambivalence stems from the fact that Korea's experience of modernity is irrevocably entwined with its colonial history. Although efforts to modernise Korea were undertaken in the immediate pre-colonial period, with the assistance of other foreign nations, it was the Japanese who were primarily responsible for the transformations made to Korea in the early twentieth century.¹ Whilst acknowledging that the modernisation of the Korean peninsula cannot be understood solely through an examination of the colonial period, this chapter explores how contemporary cinema has looked back to this era as the time during which many of the fundamental changes to society we associate with modernisation occurred.

This chapter will therefore explore how modernisation, modernity and colonialism have become entwined in cinematic representations of Korea's colonial period. My argument is that the narrative of Japanese aggression and Korean subjugation explored in the previous chapter is only part of the story of Korea's colonial experience. Contemporary representations of colonial Korea provide a space through which to view this period in a less negative light, emphasising the transformations and glamour of modernity at the expense of a concern with national pride. Similarly, there is shown to be a fluidity in the representation of Japanese and Korean imperial subjects during this period, in which the boundaries between them are broken down and therefore the associations between Korean/Victim and Japanese/Aggressor become harder to maintain.

I begin by discussing what is meant by the terms modernity and modernisation, and explore how the perspective of colonial modernity has integrated these concepts within the discourse surrounding colonialism. I also discuss how the entire notion of a Japanese-led modernisation of the Korean peninsula during the colonial period has become an ideological battleground within studies of the period, an argument which forces us to question the positive value ascribed to modernity in this context.² Following this I examine a number of recent films, in particular *Blue Swallow* and *Radio Dayz*, in order to demonstrate how they depict the appeal of the modern world. This either emerges through a fascination with the technologies of modernity in and of themselves, or through the ways in which they provide opportunities, for personal advancement, for resistance, and for the formation of a Korean community. A vital aspect of the modernisation of Korea was how the colonial period allowed for the formation of new identities for the colonised people. The

figures of the Modern Boy and Modern Girl, which emerged during the 1920s, demonstrate the extent to which the Korean people were able to appropriate, and become active agents in, the process of modernisation instigated by their colonial masters. Finally, I look at the ways in which specific characters in these films are able to mobilise different subject positions at will, and through this act the binary oppositions between coloniser/colonised and Japanese/Korean are revealed to be more porous and less immutable than the representations discussed in the preceding chapter would imply.

Putting the Modernity in Colonial Modernity

Emerging in Western societies as a result of the Enlightenment, the philosophy of modernity, in its most utopian form, sought the development of the sciences, the 'liberation' of knowledge from the forces of myth, religion and superstition and promoted doctrines of 'equality, liberty, faith in human intelligence... and universal reason'.³ Modernisation in the context of this discussion refers to a process of transformation, which may be enacted upon any number of arenas or systems, with the intent of increasing their efficiency or otherwise enhancing a trait considered valuable. Modernity is the condition of being modern, that is, a part of the modern world, a world transformed by modernisation.

A key facet in any discussion of modernisation is the impossibility of completing such a task. Seemingly as soon as a new technology, system or style emerges, it is superseded by its successor. The very process of development 'must itself go through perpetual development', ensuring that all that is 'innovative and avant-garde at one historical moment will become backward and obsolescent in the next'.⁴ An era of such rapid and fundamental modifications to the fabric of society unsurprisingly leads to a conception of

'time, space and causality as transitory, fleeting, and fortuitous and arbitrary'⁵, and the assessment that the only secure thing about modernity is its insecurity.⁶

The modernisation of a society therefore engenders a modernisation of the conceptions and consciousness of its citizens, in order that they might adapt to such a brave new world.

In using the terms modernity and modernisation it is vital to maintain an awareness of how they are the products of a specific time and place, and thus demand appropriate contextualisation. Peter Wagner writes that modernity was originally associated with the states which constituted the 'First World', those who were engaged in 'liberal-democratic industrial capitalism', and were positioned against the Socialist 'Second World' and as more 'advanced' than the 'so-called developing countries' of the Third World.⁷ The dominant assumption was that modernity originated in 'the West'/'First World' and that there was, and could be, only a single model of modernity which all non-modern/western states would be forced to adopt, although they would inevitably continue to lag behind the Western originator states.⁸ Yet as these non-Western states have engaged in their own endeavours to modernise, it has become clear that there are multiple paths to modernity.⁹ In these states, the particularities of their own historical contexts and the necessity to produce localised, specific solutions to national problems has taken precedence over the emulation of the 'Western model'.¹⁰ In place of a singular conception of modernity, therefore, a theory of multiple modernities seeks to chip away at the Eurocentrism of modernisation theory; yet, while acknowledging the multiplicity of local variations, we must recognise that these modernities cannot be considered in the abstract. Non-Western modernities, whilst individually distinctive, are the result of confrontations and negotiations with Western

modernity.¹¹ In the context of Korea, this encounter with the West occurs at an extra degree of separation, as it was through the filter of its Japanese coloniser that Korea initially encountered many of the facets of western modernity.

Korea's own pre-colonial efforts to modernise were enacted in conjunction with agents of the modernised Western nations, particularly the United States, alongside Russia and, clearly, Japan.¹² The tension between the foreign powers and the rulers of Korea in the pre-colonial period are depicted in both *The Sword with No Name* and *Gabi*, both of which are at least partly based on historical events. In the former, Queen Min serves as a bridge between western diplomats and the Korean royal court. The Japanese, fearing that she will allow this western influence to overwhelm theirs on the peninsula, assassinate her. *Gabi*, set in the period following this assassination, portrays a power struggle between Japanese and Russian agents for influence over Korea's monarch. Both texts depict how encounters with the western powers spur on Korea's ambitions to modernise, just as they both ultimately allude to how Japan severed these relationships, ensuring that Korea's only interaction with western modernity was through its Asian neighbour.

Just as modernity in Japan was not a simple replication of the Western model, Korean modernity was not a clone of its Japanese counterpart. From the Japanese perspective, the colonisation of Korea was another step in its own efforts to modernise and saw it both emulate and learn from the actions of the western empires.¹³ That Korean modernity was a further modification of the Japanese model, rather than merely its recreation can be demonstrated by, as an example, the political system established on the peninsula. Instead of establishing a separate Diet (the Japanese Parliament) to govern the Korean peninsula, (copying the metropolitan model), or including representatives from

the colony in the national Diet (incorporating the colony into the Japanese model as a prefecture), an entirely new system of government was established in which a Governor-General, reporting solely to the Emperor, was appointed. Korea's modernity must therefore be understood as an enactment of Japanese modernity modified by the conditions of colonialism, just as this latter modernity was itself a modification of the West's model of modernity.

To this end, the notion of colonial modernity as discussed by Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson in their introduction to the edited volume *Colonial Modernity in Korea* is helpful in the ways in which it charts the interplay between modernity and colonialism.¹⁴ While not discussing from where the term colonial modernity originated, Shin and Robinson illustrate that it and 'East Asian Modernity' are both terms, along with the less contextually specific 'high modernity' and 'postmodernity' that have been used to grapple with the issues they wish to discuss.¹⁵ They argue that in order to understand the colonial period beyond the linear channels through which it has traditionally been discussed, it is important to view colonialism, modernity and nationalism as three intertwined forces which interact, each carrying 'its own cluster of concepts while holding within its frame important constituents of the other two'.¹⁶ As such, any examination of Japanese colonialism must take into account the efforts made by the colonial government to modernise the peninsula, as this endeavour fundamentally shaped their policies, and therefore the shape of Japanese colonialism in Korea. It is this tripartite framework to which I refer when discussing colonial modernity in this chapter; however, it should be noted that the emphasis in these following pages is upon the relationship between colonialism and modernity and that between modernity

and nationalism. The interactions between colonialism and nationalism which form the third branch of this matrix have been explored in the previous chapter.

Two elements discussed in the theorisation of western modernity become especially potent when filtered through the ideology of Imperial Japan and applied to colonial Korea. The first of these is that modernity is inherently contradictory, being simultaneously liberating and constricting. Marshall Berman describes modernity as a world in which 'everything is pregnant with its contradictory', filled with possibilities that 'are at once glorious and ominous'.¹⁷ In the Korean context, modernity's association with colonialism serves only to heighten these contradictions. When viewed from the perspective of a colonised subject, how can modernity, a process associated with the Enlightenment, liberty and democratisation be compatible with colonialism, which would seem to be its very antithesis?

Shin and Robinson suggest that for many scholars, especially those from Korea, modernity is an irrevocably positive concept, and thus utterly irreconcilable with colonialism, which is viewed as an irredeemably negative experience.¹⁸ For these scholars, 'modernity signifies progress', and cannot be associated 'with such retrograde phenomena as colonialism: the latter hinders the creation of a "true" modernity or at best produces a "distorted" development'.¹⁹ This perspective is perhaps best typified by the title of a chapter by Edward I-Te Chen, named 'Japan: Oppressor or Modernizer?'.²⁰ By positioning modernity and oppression as two mutually exclusive concepts, the author is unable to consider the possibility that Japan might have modernised the peninsula whilst simultaneously oppressing a great many of its inhabitants, nor can he confront the ways in which the apparatuses of modernity are themselves inherently oppressive. In a similar vein, Park Chan Seung discusses

the three frameworks through which the colonial period has been viewed, namely theories of colonial exploitation, colonial modernization and colonial modernity, and finds the latter two wanting due to their lack of focus on national subjugation.²¹ His statement that the 'most important problem' when discussing colonial societies 'is undoubtedly the issue of the nation' is indicative of a field of research in which discussion of modernity or the advances of the colonial period are negated for fear of providing justification for Japan's actions.²² By producing films that have confronted these self-imposed ideological blindspots, recent South Korean cinema can be viewed as adopting the theoretical perspective espoused by Shin and Robinson by refusing to allow either nationalism, colonialism or modernity to dominate their discourse.

The second facet of modernity heightened by its association with Japanese colonialism is the way in which modernity, as a continuously transitioning social state, is defined by its incessant focus on the present and the immediate future, at the expense of any ability to engage with the past. The 'transitoriness' of modernity ensures that it is 'difficult to preserve any sense of historical continuity' and entails a 'ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions'.²³ Berman sees the drive 'to create a homogenous environment... in which the look and feel of the old world have disappeared without a trace' as being endemic to modernisation.²⁴ This tendency is, as Frantz Fanon argues, also endemic to the colonial relationship. Colonialism, he claims, 'is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and future of a dominated country'; it also 'turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it'.²⁵ Korea thus found its connection to its own history doubly threatened, by the forces of colonialism entwined with the transformations of modernisation.

Even if we accept that a gulf between the past and the present is a fundamental aspect of all modernities and colonial situations, Japanese colonial policy in Korea sought, in a particularly deliberate and calculated way, to create a schism between its colony's present and its pre-modern/pre-colonial past. Japanese colonial academics undertook studies and reportedly manipulated the historical record in order to support Japanese claims that the peninsula had historically been a Japanese territory.²⁶ As part of the colonial government's assimilationist policies, Korean subjects were 'encouraged' to adopt Japanese names, and by 1940 80% of the Korean population were believed to have done so.²⁷ Coupled with the restrictions on the use of the Korean language, the forced wearing of coloured clothing (in contrast to the long-held traditions of wearing white) and a change in the family registration system from the Korean to Japanese model, these actions demonstrate an effort to sever the colonised population from their pre-colonial heritage.²⁸ As Lone and McCormack have pointed out, in Confucianist societies, a cardinal tenet is respect for one's ancestors, one aspect of which includes the perpetuation of the family name. By eradicating these Korean names and introducing Japanese names, ensuring that family registers would have to be started anew, this system would break personal historical lines, in effect creating a metaphorical 'year zero'.²⁹ Such changes were often justified as efforts to modernise out-dated systems or cultural practices.³⁰ Japan's approach to colonial modernity therefore had the effect of eradicating any and all traces of the pre-colonial in order to recreate Korea as a fully assimilated colonial state.

The result of such a break with the past is that once it has occurred, the past can only be viewed from the perspective of, and using the language of, the modern. Fanon finds this dilemma present in his description of the post-colonial

artist. In attempting to address a 'true national culture', surely a companion to the 'true modernity' discussed above, the artist rejects the foreign culture which they had previously adopted and scours the nation's past in an effort to continue in their own art the 'constant principles' which persisted in the pre-colonial period and defined its pre-colonial culture.³¹ The futility of this endeavour lies, however, in the fact that colonialism, alongside the 'modern techniques of information, language and dress' that accompanied it, have 'dialectically reorganised the people's intelligences'.³² This reorganisation ensures that the colonial subject approaches the achievements of their nation's past 'like a foreigner', as colonialism and modernity have combined to so alter their perspective as to alienate them from their own past.³³

Whilst modernisation creates a gulf between a society's present and its own past, the technologies of modernity allow individuals greater and greater access to their own cultural history, but in doing so highlight the distance by which they are separated from this past. This principle is aptly demonstrated by the release, from 2007-9, of recently discovered cinematic material from Korea's colonial period on DVD. Produced by the Korean Film Archive and distributed with a series title of 'The Past Unearthed' in four volumes, this series comprises of a number of features, shorts and newsreels produced between 1935 and 1944. On the one hand, these texts grant a contemporary audience an incredible opportunity to witness history. Although they are clearly cultural products produced under the auspices of the colonial government to present a particular message to its colonial conquests, and as such are clearly mediated and manipulated representations of the world they depict, the indexical nature of the cinematic medium ensures that they allow Korea's colonial period to come alive for an audience in a way that few other mediums can compete with.

Yet the historical distance that these films have traversed is inescapably visible in the appearance of the images on screen. In spite of their modern digital incarnation and the efforts of the Korean Film Archive to restore a number of the films to something more closely resembling their former state, they cannot help but appear as historical artefacts. Whether it is through their form, (*The Power of Sincerity* (Dir. Unknown, c.1935) is a silent film with intertitles), their content, (the cityscapes of *Sweet Dream* (Yang Joo-nam, 1936), for example, are strikingly colonial), or the numerous scratches, distortions or image artefacts which betray a negative that has endured the passage of time, these films clearly emerge from a modernity of different temporality. These films, which were exemplary of the modernities of their historical moment, have been eclipsed by the ensuing development and modernisation of the cinematic form, and now appear to us as relics.

In the latest incarnation of this modernised cinematic form we can view an attempt by contemporary South Korean filmmakers to hypothesise an alternate historical timeline in regard to the nation's modernisation, one in which modernity and traditional Korean culture were allowed to co-exist. Two films, set in the period shortly before the Japanese occupation, but in a time in which Japanese influence dominated the peninsula, have attempted to show that the Japanese-led modernisation of the peninsula during the colonial period aborted Korea's own efforts to modernise in a method more in keeping with its traditional, national culture. In the first of these films, *The Sword With No Name*, the Korean royal family, in front of an audience of international guests, hold a grand unveiling of an electric light system. The illumination is preceded by more traditional pursuits, an example of calligraphy and a demonstration of drumming, suggesting that this modernity is entirely compatible with existing

Korean culture. A Japanese delegate in the audience is particularly impressed by the electric lights, asking his superior, who remains silent and downcast, how Korea could discover this before Japan. This same principle is continued in *Private Eye* in which Soon-Deok, the woman who provides the protagonist Jin-Ho with his gadgets, fuses the modern and the traditional. We see her initially in a traditional Korean house (*hanok*), dressed in traditional dress (*hanbok*), serving as an iconic image of Confucian femininity. However, on entering her workshop, we see her, still in traditional dress, welding, whilst wearing the appropriate mask. (Figure 2.1) Kang has astutely pointed out that many of the devices which Soon-Deok uses are related to optical advances, such as camera, periscopes and mirrors. “These visual devices suggest not only newly introduced modern novelties but also altered modes of human perception”.³⁴ Here modernity is accompanied by a very literal change in the way in which characters perceive their world.



Figure 2.1: The welding together of tradition and modernity in *Private Eye*.

The apparent dichotomy between traditional and modern in the pre-colonial world is negated in these scenes. It is only in the films set during the colonial period itself that the tensions between the modern and the traditional

become more pronounced. *The Sword With No Name* and *Private Eye* appear to construct a fictional space in which modernisation was able to occur, at least initially, in Korea without Japanese involvement, and would not have necessitated the chasm between the modern and the traditional which emerged during the occupation. This perspective reflects the viewpoint of the scholars discussed previously who viewed Japanese actions as diverting and corrupting a uniquely Korean form of modernity.

Both *The Sword With No Name* and *Private Eye* depict a world in which Korean characters are active agents within the process of modernisation, embracing and constructing their own modernity, rather than merely grateful recipients of Japanese modernity. This tendency emerges across the body of contemporary South Korean colonial films, depicting worlds in which the lives of their protagonists are transformed through their interaction with products of modernity, products which serve to further enmesh them within the colonial system. The following section discusses how this modern world, and the machines and technologies it carries with it, have been presented as glamorous and appealing in recent South Korean cinema, in spite of the negative connotations that their association with Japanese colonialism may be expected to invoke.

Beautiful Machines: Modernity as Spectacle

The traumas and atrocities of the Japanese colonial occupation have found their cinematic expression on the nation's screens since the dawn of the new millennium, but alongside this emphasis on the horrors of the period one can discern a fascination with the transformations enacted upon the peninsula, and a realisation that depictions of suffering cannot capture the totality of Korea's

colonial experience. A sense of ambivalence emerges from these depictions, as the brutality of colonialism is confronted by the glamour of Korea's blossoming modernity. Modernity is a multi-faceted concept, and thus the burden of its representation is held by multiple tropes. In arguing that it is through positive representations of the modernisation bought about by the Japanese colonial apparatus that South Korean cinema has assuaged its wholeheartedly negative portrayal of its colonial past, I will focus upon how different features of the modern world have been privileged by contemporary films. The first feature I wish to draw attention to is how modern machinery stands in for the whole process of modernisation. Modernity and modernisation are characterised by a multiplicity of machines. In lieu of examining each specific machine, I turn to the aeroplane, one of modernity's most iconic symbols as exemplary of the promise held by modernity in the colonial period.

The aeroplane, 'the most 'futuristic' artefact of the first half of the twentieth century, has held a privileged position in modernist art and thought.³⁵ The Futurists, advocates of the unequalled brilliance of modernity, promised in their manifesto that the movement would sing of the glory of 'the gliding flight of aeroplanes whose propeller sounds like the flapping of a flag and the applause of enthusiastic crowds'.³⁶ These machines inspired Le Corbusier, a pioneer of modern architecture,³⁷ as well as artists from across different schools interested in the representation of the modern world,³⁸ and early aviators, such as Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh, who would become celebrities through the proliferation of mass-media in the early twentieth century. There are three specific aspects of the symbolism of the aeroplane that I wish to explore in conjunction with their depiction within contemporary South Korean films set in the colonial period, namely how they epitomise a technical mastery of nature,

how they allow for a transformed perspective upon an environment, and finally how they are equated with power.

The spectacle of the aeroplane in flight attests to mankind's ability to dominate its environment. Not only does the sight of a heavier-than-air craft flying demonstrate a mastering of the physical sciences, but by liberating a person from the geography of the land and permitting travel to be defined by geometric, rather than natural features, an individual is emancipated from nature.³⁹ This notion of flight as an avenue of emancipation is adopted from the very opening scenes of *Blue Swallow*. In telling the story of Park Kyung-won, one of the first Korean female aviators, who was trained in Japan and later went on to fly missions to promote Japanese Imperial expansion, the filmmakers have attempted to sidestep questions of nationalism and collaboration by instead emphasising the liberatory potential of modernity.

The pre-title scenes, set in 1910, are shot with a highly de-saturated colour palate, verging almost into sepia, from within which only a few colours are emphasised (Figure 2.2). The young Kyung-won is first seen in a crowd watching Japanese soldiers enter the town. In a voice-over, she discusses how the adults around her are grief-stricken over the theft of their land by Japan, but the children instead talk only about ninjas. The Japanese troops the crowds are watching suddenly transform into ninjas, and the bright red centres of the Japanese flags the soldiers were carrying become repeated in the large banners held by the ninjas (Figures 2.3 & 2.4). This scene transitions into a fantasy sequence, filled with deep blue and dark black tones. In Kyung-won's daydream she sees ninjas flying through the sky, and finally herself soaring towards the camera, now in bold colours. In her hands she is cradling a drably coloured bird, which she releases, and upon taking flight it becomes a vibrant

yellow. The bold colours in these sequences allude to the young girl's fascination with flight, and yet this is a desire bound from the very beginning to the Japanese occupation. Indeed, the ability of the Japanese ninjas to conquer gravity prefigures Park's encounter with the aeroplane that demonstrates to her Japan's mastery of the air.



Figure 2.2: Park Kyung-won inhabits a drab, de-saturated world...

Park Kyung-won is presented as being at odds with the drabness of the pre-modern Korean world she finds herself in. She is shown gathering wood, then peering into a classroom at a group of children learning the alphabet, and later arguing with her father that she deserves an education, in spite of being a woman. The washed-out colours of her environment show that there are few good prospects for a girl such as her. Yet all of this is to change on the day in which she first sees an aeroplane. As the camera tilts down from the sky to find her in a cornfield, the colour scheme transitions from being under- to over-emphasised, and the muted greys and browns are replaced by vibrant and vivid golds and blues (Figure 2.5). The beauty of the luscious light pouring over this archetypal bucolic scene is suddenly interrupted by a shadow. A high angle long shot depicts the shadow of a plane, silently crossing the cornfield, before it

cuts to a close-up of Kyung-won's face, mouth agape and eyes wide with amazement as the shadow of the aircraft crosses her face. The vividness of the colour-grading in this sequence serves to position this encounter as inhabiting an almost entirely separate world to the one with which Park is familiar. Rather than experiencing grief, as her elders did, at the encounter with the Japanese, for this young girl the Japanese, and their technology, represent a vibrant, exciting possibility.



Figure 2.3: The arrival of the Japanese



Figure 2.4: Colour is introduced into Park's world by the Japanese



Figure 2.5: Finally, Kyung-won's first encounter with an aeroplane is rendered in rich, vibrant hues. (Figures 2.2-2.5 from *Blue Swallow*)

Of particular significance here is how traditional Korean culture is pitted against a modernity explicitly associated with the Japanese, and found to be wanting. Over the course of *Blue Swallow's* narrative, it is the aeroplane that both inspires and permits Kyung-won to transcend the limitations of her birth, granting her an escape from both her physical and cultural environment, and allows her to become an active figure in the modern world.

Upon liberating the individual from the confines of gravity and geography, flight also grants a new perspective. This 'Olympian gaze' gives its spectators 'the idea of mastery and control of a bewildering geography'.⁴⁰ In emulating the divine, the aerial perspective would appear to be the perfect vantage point from which the colonisers could view their subjects. This perspective denotes a certain type of dominance over an environment, one that contrasts notably with the lived experiences of those who inhabit these regions at ground level. In his discussion of *Rome Open City* (Roberto Rossellini, 1945), David Forgacs

discusses how the view of Rome held by the German occupying forces, as depicted through the maps which hang on their office walls, is entirely distinct from the city inhabited by the resistance fighters, who are able to use tunnels and their superior knowledge of the city's lower levels to evade and ambush the Nazi forces.⁴¹ A similar contrast is depicted in *Modern Boy*. In this film, the protagonist works as an urban planner for the colonial government. The sprawling city maps through which he and the colonial organisation understand the city fail to encompass the wide variety of spaces used by the resistance fighters who torment them. These spaces could all be described as semi-public and secluded, comprising areas such as backrooms in shops and the backstage area of an open-air theatre. A separation at the level of geographical perspective associates the colonised, particularly the resistance, with marginal, street level spaces, and the colonial forces with an aerial, dominating vantage point.⁴² This perspective is one which Park is granted through her cooperation with the Japanese in *Blue Swallow*.

The association of colonial power with flight, domination and the aerial perspective is made clear in *Fighter In The Wind*. In this film, an aeroplane appears in a scene discussed in the previous chapter, during which it drops recruitment flyers onto a crowd gathered to watch a boxing match. The Japanese dominance over Korea is shown very literally in this sequence, as the skyline is littered with Japanese flags, and above them, the Japanese airplane. The final image of the plane is of it flying off towards the sun, with the film's protagonist, Choi Bae-dal, gazing on in admiration. The aeroplane grants the Japanese the ability to soar above the colonial city, raining their decrees upon the colonised populace. In this instance, the posters that fall from the plane are invocations to the people to join the air corps.

The attraction of this offer, and the potential it allows to adopt the perspective of power, clearly has an impact upon Bae-dal, as we next see him three years later having snuck onto the Japanese mainland in order to attend aviation school. When questioned about this choice, he responds that he doesn't care about living or dying, he just wishes to become a pilot, a dream that is aborted by the end of the Pacific War. For Choi Bae-dal, like Park Kyung-won in *Blue Swallow*, the aeroplane symbolised the possibilities of a better life, beyond his status as a colonised subject. Ultimately this life is denied to him, as he and his fellow Korean pilots are exiled from the air force, to be bound to large poles as an airstrike rains down, as a result of their refusal to take part in *Kamikaze* missions. In order to become active agents able to interact with the modernity they desire, the Koreans are expected to sacrifice themselves. That the destruction of the Japanese base comes as a result of an aerial assault by Allied forces further accentuates the association between the aeroplane, and, by extension modernity, with power.

Perhaps the most humiliating aspect of the Japanese colonisation of Korea, from the perspective of a Korean nationalist, is that the two nations had been in contact of some form for centuries and were perceived to occupy similar positions in a regional hierarchy in which China was dominant. The rapid modernisation of Japan that occurred in the mid- to late- nineteenth century following the nation's forced opening up by Western powers eventually led to Japan assuming a position from which it could successfully fight wars with both China and Russia. By the time Korea instigated its own attempts to modernise, Japan had had a 'head start' of a few decades. This advantage proved to be insurmountable, and ensured that when Japan set its sights upon Korea, the latter was almost powerless to resist. By showing the defeat of Korea's colonial

masters by an even more modernised power, a nation's strength becomes linked to their level of modernisation. Rather than any inherent Japanese superiority, the colonial domination of the peninsula can be attributed to Japan's more modernised status, which was in itself instigated by western involvement.

The fascination with the aeroplane experienced by the protagonists of *Blue Swallow* and *Fighter in the Wind* is presented as working counter to a sense of Korean nationalism. Rather than condemning these characters for aligning themselves with the colonial powers, these films supplant nationalism with modernity as the desire that drives Park and Choi. They are able to see in Japanese colonialism more than just a brutal system of repression. For them colonialism brings with it the beauty of these flying machines, and the potential that they grant for these characters to transcend the misery of their existences. The aeroplane is just one symbol of a much wider process of modernisation enacted upon the peninsula by the Japanese, and the appeals of modernity emerge across the body of films in a number of different guises. *Fighter in the Wind* and *Blue Swallow* demonstrate this appeal acting on a personal, individual level, but the modernisation of Korea was accompanied by the instigation of modern forms of mass-media, and in *Radio Dayz* we see how this allowed for the transmission of modernity, and modern ways of thinking, to the masses.

Speaking Korean in the Japanese Empire

The interaction between colonial subjects and an artefact of modernity introduced to the peninsula by the Japanese, and the potential for colonial citizens to use these devices for their own advantage, is present throughout *Radio Dayz*. The film depicts the birth and early life of a radio station in 1930s

Seoul. In the station's first few weeks of operation, Lloyd, the primary protagonist of the film and a producer at the radio station, stages a musical recital with a popular jazz singer to be broadcast live. On the streets of the city, a Japanese official notices crowds amassed around a storefront with a radio playing this concert, and realises that radio may have purposes beyond merely the collection of additional tax revenue. Lloyd is then summoned to the offices of the station manager and commissioned to create a radio drama, something that will appeal to 'the elite, as well as the lowly peasants, men, women' and the 'young and old'.⁴³ Most importantly however, Lloyd is told, is that the drama should 'exalt the superiority of the Japanese Empire and Emperor', and that it 'should arouse loyalty, but not be too obvious' whilst still being entertaining and exciting. The primary narrative of the film therefore becomes the efforts of Lloyd and his team to construct this popular radio drama, whilst simultaneously negotiating internal conflicts and the political pressures which trickle down from station management.

Surprisingly, to Lloyd and his team as much as anyone, their show, 'The Flame of Love', becomes a cultural phenomenon, with scenes being re-enacted in the streets and huge numbers of people flocking to the radio station itself to hear the broadcasts. Seeing the popularity of the program, the station manager forces Lloyd to change the ending of his drama, having the lead character turn his back on the love triangle which had, thus-far, dominated the story and instead volunteer for the Japanese Army in Manchuria. During the broadcast of the climactic final episode of the drama, Lloyd and the other actors rebel against the station management. The fictional hero's train to Manchuria is derailed by 'terrorists', causing him to re-evaluate his patriotic desires and decide instead to return to his life of romance. In a final act of defiance, Lloyd attempts

to include the sound of a spark in the broadcast. This spark has a secret purpose, having been set up as a covert signal by K, a resistance fighter who had infiltrated the radio station as the producer of sound effects for Lloyd's drama. Upon hearing the spark, resistance groups across Korea and Manchuria were intended to be spurred into action. However, having heard that the broadcast was not going as expected, the radio station management storm the studio with Japanese soldiers, inadvertently shutting down the broadcast and ensuring that the sound of the spark is not transmitted to the resistance fighters.

While the armed uprising against Japanese colonialism never comes, it is not to say that Lloyd's rebellion has been in vain. In rewriting the radio drama, Lloyd displaced servitude to the Emperor as the most important act in the life of a colonial subject, instead positioning their own individual identity and relationships as paramount. The radio technology which was intended to inspire the populace into a patriotic vigour was ultimately the same tool that was used to debunk this mythology. The propaganda value of the radio, designed to be an ideological torch wielded by the Japanese against the Koreans, was appropriated by its intended targets and turned into a beacon of independence.

Whilst the physical spark lit by Lloyd failed to ignite a revolution, it was itself not without consequence. As the Japanese soldiers storm the radio studio, Lloyd lights the stick of dynamite K had prepared to create the sound of the spark. Shortly before the explosives ignite, Lloyd hurls the dynamite out of the window, where it explodes in a shower of sparks in the sky above the amassed audience. Some of K's associates are in the crowd handing out small fireworks. Upon seeing the dynamite explode, they launch their fireworks, prompting the rest of the crowd to follow suit. The sky fills with light as the camera looks down upon a sea of smiling Korean faces. The spark which was intended to provoke

an armed uprising instead instigated a communal act of celebration. With the help of radio and fireworks, Lloyd has managed to create a unified community from amongst the citizens of colonised Seoul.

In this way the film alludes to the significance of Korean language radio to the preservation and promotion of Korean culture and communities during the colonial period. The policy of Cultural Rule, instigated following the mass civilian uprisings of the March 1st Movement, allowed for an increased level of Korean cultural expression within the colony. During this period, Korean language newspapers and radio broadcasts, both mediums which were heavily controlled and monitored by the Japanese, provided a resource through which colonial subjects could maintain contact with their native language and culture. In its, albeit simplified, presentation of the birth of radio broadcasting on the Korean peninsula, *Radio Dayz* harks back to this complex period of colonial history in which the Korean and Japanese languages circulated side-by-side in the cultural arena, before the doctrine of *naisen ittai* ensured that the culture of the colonised was phased out of the public sphere wherever possible.

It should be pointed out that, in the real world, radio was not embraced by colonial subjects in as smooth a manner as depicted in *Radio Dayz*. Radio broadcasting in Korea under the call sign JODK commenced in February 1927, rather than in the 1930s, as depicted by the film.⁴⁴ This radio station broadcast in both Japanese and Korean, initially at a ratio of three hours of Japanese programming to each in Korean, with the usage of Korean increasing to 40 percent of airtime within six months of the station's launch.⁴⁵ This dual-language broadcasting system has been attributed with inhibiting the spread of radio use in the Korean community, and as such stifled the expansion of a medium that relied upon registration and listener fees for its revenue.⁴⁶ In order to increase

its engagement with the Korean populace, in 1933 the Kyōngsōng Broadcast Corporation launched a second, all-Korean radio station. This would appear to be the station depicted in *Radio Dayz*, were it not for a seemingly inconsequential observation by the aforementioned Japanese official that it was currently time for the Korean language radio broadcasts.

In spite of this slight divergence from recorded historical fact, *Radio Dayz* manages to aptly demonstrate the tensions, ironies and contradictions inherent in the notion of a native-language radio station in a colony administered under an assimilationist doctrine. While the historic Korean-language radio station could never have committed such an act of resistance against the Japanese government as that depicted in *Radio Dayz*, it, like Lloyd's sparks, served to propagate a sense of Korean community in the face of Japanese domination. Although radio broadcasts in Korea were intended to support Japanese political and cultural hegemony in the peninsula, Korean-language radio was, as Michael Robinson argues, able to create 'a counter-hegemonic niche in and of itself' whilst stimulating 'other nodes of cultural construction within the colony'.⁴⁷ The existence of this 'niche' allowed for the development and maintenance of the language of the native population at a time in which it was under increasing threat. Beyond merely ensuring that Korean persisted in being a continued presence within the colony, radio broadcasts allowed for the standardisation, dissemination and modernisation of Korean grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary. Korean language lectures sought to deal not only with elements of Korea's history, tradition and cultures, and in doing so preserve them, but also endeavoured to address the developments of the modern world.⁴⁸ Through proving that the Korean language was as capable of dealing with modern abstract thought and the nature of modernity as Japanese, Korean language

radio served to nativise the transformations wrought to the peninsula by the Japanese colonial administration. Radio, therefore, as an aspect of colonial modernity, served not only to disseminate, maintain and modernise traditional Korean culture, but also provided an avenue through which Koreans could interact and engage with their rapidly modernising world.

Ultimately, the significance of this development may have been dampened by the fact that colonial radio never reached dramatic levels of adoption amongst the general Korean population, and remained for much of its existence the privilege of Japanese settlers in Korea or the Korean elite, although many radios were certainly used in public settings, such as depicted in *Radio Dayz*. Although my preceding summary of the usage of Korean language radio might suggest an inherently Korean nationalist interpretation, the reality of colonial modernity is far less easily politicised. As much as this new medium allowed for the expression of Korean language and culture, it did, as Robinson observes, ensure that the Korean elite were drawn ever further into the modern sphere, 'enmeshing them within colonial cultural hegemony'.⁴⁹ As these individuals became more and more integrated with the technologies and into the structures of modernity, the extent to which they could be considered to be 'outside' of the colonial project lessens. We can see this demonstrated in *Radio Dayz* by the characters of Mr. Noh, the writer recruited to pen the narratives for 'The Flame of Love', and by Lloyd. Whilst neither could be confused for a literary or intellectual genius, both Lloyd and Noh represent an educated class of Koreans who would have lived much of their life, and very probably would have received their education, under Japanese colonial rule. That these men, who ultimately chose to support and promote Korean resistance in the face of escalating colonial control, might find themselves working for an organisation

that ultimately is responsible for transmitting Japanese propaganda whilst establishing and maintaining a Japanese colonial hegemony, demonstrates the extent to which citizens were co-opted into the colonial regime through their need for employment. By exerting such total control over as many different sectors as possible, Japanese colonial policies ensured that anyone seeking to find employment or even indulge in recreational activities was to greater or lesser extents integrating themselves into the colonial world.

Strikingly, *Radio Dayz*, which derives its narrative from the struggles of a form of localised mass media to persist in an arena dominated and controlled by foreign forces, appears shortly after a moment in which the ability of Korean language media to survive was once again being called into question. In this instance, Korean culture was seen to be threatened not by the actions of an aggressive colonial state, but by the diplomatic negotiations which dictate the terms of the current, globalised capitalist economy, and whereas radio had proven to be the battleground in colonial Korea, this more recent conflict revolved around the nation's cinemas. In 2006, as a prelude to a Free Trade Agreement, South Korea bowed to pressure from the United States and amended the screen quota system.⁵⁰ This system, which had existed in some form since 1966, served to protect the local industry from being overwhelmed by foreign imports by requiring that each theatre screened domestically produced films for 146 days, amounting to 40% of the year.⁵¹ Although previous attempts had been made by Hollywood lobbyists in the late 1990s to address this state of affairs, which led to some highly visible public protests by high-profile figures within the Korean film industry, this requirement had remained in place throughout South Korean cinema's boom at the beginning of the millennium.⁵² When this quota was eventually reduced in 2006, down to 73

days, it followed a number of years in which the local industry had consistently managed to achieve a greater than 50% share of the domestic box office.

Although this announcement, and its ratification five years later, caused a level of perturbation within the industry, the sustained success of South Korean cinema in its homeland appears to demonstrate that the industry has the strength to survive competition without state-mandated protections.

Yet at the time of *Radio Dayz*'s production and release, this future must have seemed far from secure. Read in this context, the film uses the colonial period to stand in for the contemporary globalised market, two situations in which Korean culture must fight to ensure its survival against potentially overwhelming odds. Ultimately Lloyd succeeds in creating content that appeals to the Korean audience, and in doing so fosters a greater sense of community and national identity. This would seem like an ambitious enough goal to set Korean filmmakers, but Ha Ki-ho's film goes one step further, turning the tables of the debate to illuminate the full potential of 'Free Trade'. During the announcement of the cast at the end of the final episode of 'The Flame of Love', one of the characters is given the pen name James, the name of an American who had managed to pick up the JODK transmission across the Pacific and had written a letter to the station. This otherwise inconsequential moment in the film illustrates the fact that cultural transmission can travel in both directions, and that while the Fair-Trade Agreement reduces the protection afforded to Korean films, it serves to reduce some of the barriers to their international transmission. At this historical juncture, Korean filmmakers have the potential, as demonstrated by Lloyd, to use foreign, modern technology to simultaneously reach a Korean and an international audience. If modernity is, as discussed previously, a process of becoming, *Radio Dayz* demonstrates that the

challenges of the contemporary era are merely new incarnations of those faced previously. An engagement with history not only interrogates the past from the perspective of contemporary concerns, but in doing so highlights continuity, bridging the distances bought about by the passing of time. The extent to which current neoliberal political agreements serve as the contemporary incarnation of the processes which propelled colonialism and imperialism in previous centuries is a matter for fertile discussion, and is far beyond the remits of this thesis.

However, in both of the historical contexts that are bought together in *Radio Dayz*, Korea is presented as a small nation, which nonetheless manages to turn the tools of its opponent against them and, in doing so, reclaim a space for a nationally Korean form of self-expression.

Being Modern, Turning Japanese

Above and beyond the potential for the technologies of modernity to be co-opted by those with a desire for resistance, the modernisation of the peninsula also provided the opportunity for individuals to transform themselves and their society. In doing so, these characters become, to greater or lesser extents, active agents in a colonial project which sought to transform the Korea of the nineteenth century into something 'modernised', in order to increase its value to its new colonial masters. In the highly polemicised arena of colonial history, in which resistance and collaboration are often pronounced as the only two options available to a colonised subject, there is a vast and politically sensitive middle-ground in which the colonised interact, without strong ideological positioning, with the manifestations of colonialism. For these figures, the politics of colonialism do not form a fundamental aspect of their identity construction, and in place of the reductive essentialism of the roles of 'resistance fighter' or

'pro-Japanese collaborator', a multiplicity of more nuanced, individuated subject positions are able to emerge.

The figures who most demonstrate the modernisation of Korean identity are those who have come to be defined by this label. The 'modern boy' and 'modern girl' are two archetypes that emerged during the Japanese colonial period. These figures represent a proportion of the younger population, those who grew up under Japanese colonialism, and through their experiences of being encultured under the colonial regime were turned away, to a certain extent, from traditional Korean culture. Instead these figures adopted a glamorised form of 'modern' culture, Western in origin, but introduced to Korea by its filtration through Japan. Although it is possible that these figures were hardly common on the streets of colonial Korea, they became archetypes, circulated by the contemporary mass media and adopted with vigour by recent South Korean colonial films.⁵³

What is it that makes a boy or girl 'Modern'? Even articles from the time recognise the complexity of this designation, highlighting two distinct, yet inherently interconnected areas, that of a modernisation of an individual's style, image and tastes, and that of a modernisation of consciousness. An article from 1927 proposes that becoming truly modern requires more than just an accumulation of stylistic trends, as 'only consciousness has a historic genealogy'.⁵⁴ This modernisation of consciousness can be expressed as a split from the feudalism of the pre-colonial period, and the complementary belief that 'individuals should be free'⁵⁵, a break with the disparity of traditional gender roles⁵⁶, or even just an adoption of more relaxed sexual mores.⁵⁷ While these modern beliefs and philosophies are vital aspects of the modernisation of identity, it is the stylistic traits exhibited by these modern girls and boys that

defined their recognition in popular culture. These 'modern boys' and 'modern girls' are characterised by their adoption of western fashions and consumer cultures, symbolising the extravagance and decadence of bourgeois society⁵⁸, which for women in particular constituted the expression of a more sexualised image. Contemporary reception to the phenomenon of the modern boy or girl may have viewed these figures with ambivalence, or even outright hostility, but their reincarnations as part of the cinematic reconfigurations of the colonial period are viewed in a far more positive light.

Across the body of South Korean colonial history films are multiple examples of characters who have modernised their outward aesthetic appearances and tastes, and through them cinema has depicted the modernisation of identity that occurred during the period. In fact, across the majority of the films collected under this loose categorisation of texts, these modern characters are the avenues through which we gain entry to their narratives. Rather than represent this modernity and modernisation as a tainted form of Korean identity, poisoned through its acceptance of and interconnectedness with Japanese colonialism, its glamour and vitality becomes the point of intersection between the film's historical recreation and the lives of their contemporary audiences. The modern protagonists of films such as *Modern Boy*, *Radio Dayz* and *Once Upon A Time* mediate our interactions with this historical time period, exemplifying through their own uneasy fit with their surroundings the increasing temporal and cultural gulf between this history and a modern viewer.

This is particularly apparent in the depiction of female characters with whom the audience is expected to identify. The release of *Blue Swallow* produced a significant amount of backlash due to its positive portrayal of a

protagonist who was a willing collaborator with the Japanese colonial project.⁵⁹

Amidst internet protestation about the glorification of 'someone regarded as having allowed herself to be made a poster girl for the cause of the Japanese Empire', the press circulated a rumour that the film's protagonist was romantically involved with the grandfather of former Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi. The film ultimately ended up being one of the most costly financial failures of the year.⁶⁰ One of the key ways in which the film complicates such a negative, nationalist reading of the figure of Park Kyung-won is through the depiction of her as expressing, and indeed acting on behalf of, a series of modern ideals. Kyung-won's actions speak not only to champion an individual's freedom of choice, as pertaining to achieving their dreams and desires, but also for a world in which a woman is not constrained by Confucian patriarchy.

Kyung-won's uniqueness, and therefore the justification for the existence of a film telling her story, is that she is believed to be Korea's first female aviator.⁶¹

From the very opening scenes (discussed above) in which she asks why she is not allowed to go to school, Kyung-won articulates concerns about the unequal treatment of women in patriarchal societies, an issue which has remained depressingly relevant despite the near century between the setting of that scene and the film's release. The modernisation of the Korean Peninsula under Japanese occupation brings a number of complex and conflicting issues into play, and contemporary films which have looked back to this period have needed to address the fact that individuals alive during that time were forced to balance different demands according to their own personal values. For the depiction of Park Kyung-won presented in *Blue Swallow*, this meant a prioritisation of her individual desires and belief in opportunities for women above a sense of nationalism. A contemporary audience is entitled to judge the

character, and the cultural response to the film indicates that clearly many people did, but by using this figure who expresses a modern consciousness as the mediator between this audience and the past, the film demonstrates that nationalism is but one of a myriad of perspectives from which to evaluate this era. As such, a more nuanced and ambivalent perspective emerges.

The conflict between traditional, and more modernised, female gender roles is narrativised in *Radio Days*, a film which values the traditional aspects of Korean culture, but is itself fascinated by the appeals of modernity. Two complementary scenes towards the beginning of the film serve to highlight the friction between tradition and modernity that plays out across the film. As the radio station is just establishing itself, Lloyd organises two musical recitals. The first, a *p'ansori* performance (a form of traditional musical storytelling), is delivered by Myung-wol, a woman who works at the station and who is always depicted in traditional dress. As she starts her performance, she bows and shakes her fan. In response, Lloyd reminds her that this is a radio performance and that nobody can see her face. Myung-wol is undeterred, and continues her performance, full of the dramatic gestures which define the form. Lloyd and his colleague smile to themselves and turn to face away from their performer.

This is placed into contrast with the performance by Marie, introduced as 'Korea's top singing star'. Played by Kim Sa-rang, a former Miss Korea, Marie is emblematic of the figure of the modern girl, right down to her Western name. Once she walks into the room the camera tracks towards her. As her performance begins, the lights fade up and we watch in a series of slowly tracking close-ups and medium close-ups. Marie's song is a soft jazz number, sung seductively and breathily, and accompanied by suitably lithe dance movements. The camera cuts between Marie and her audience, particularly

Lloyd, who in this instance is not inclined to look away or ask her to stop moving. Her dance moves more closely resemble the performances of contemporary K-Pop stars than the arch theatricality of Myung-wol's traditional art form. All in the studio are suitably enraptured, a phenomenon echoed by the crowds gathered around radios in the streets of Gyeongseong. In this, her introductory scene, Marie is positioned by the camera as resplendent, exotic, and ultimately desirable. Rather than a Korean woman corrupted by her involvement with Japanese modernity, Marie is an idealised figure that can appeal to audiences across the ages.

The modernisation of consciousness that accompanied the processes of modernity brought with it a disruption to our understanding of a unified notion of identity. In light of work informed by psychoanalysis, critical theory and feminism, we now conceive of identity as neither fixed nor constant, but instead as something constantly being formed, performed and transformed.⁶² Different aspects of an individual's identity, be they gender, race, class, sexuality, or many others, interplay in shifting and myriad ways. Indeed, the very nature of the categorisations within these areas have been shown to be little more than constructs, with porous membranes now existing where once rigid demarcations stood.

In the context of representations of colonial Korea, the boundaries being contested are principally those around national identity, and the associated position that this places an individual within a hierarchical power dynamic. Across a selection of films, I will here focus upon *Once Upon a Time* and *My Way* as examples, characters have been shown to transgress the boundaries of traditional Korean/Colonised and Japanese/Coloniser subject positions, effectively 'passing' as the other, an act which simultaneously contradicts and

confirms the narrative of Japanese colonial administration. In order to understand these transitional expressions of identity, indeed what it is that makes them transitional, it is necessary to engage with the complex, contradictory, and often confused ways in which the ideas of race, as well as cultural and national identity, were mobilised by Japanese colonial doctrine, as well as the ways in which this differentiated the Japanese model of colonialism from that practiced by western powers.

As Leo T.S Ching has pointed out, Japanese colonialism has repeatedly been viewed as an anomaly in relation to the general theory of colonialism for two distinct reasons; firstly, that it did not emerge as a result of capitalist expansion, and secondly that the empire was particular in its 'regional contiguity' and that its colonies were populated by people who were 'racially akin'.⁶³ It is this second aspect that is of importance here, as it was the rhetoric of Asian unity and *naisen ittai* that defined much of Japanese colonial policy. Although Ching writes in relation to the Japanese colonisation of Taiwan, both Taiwan and Korea experienced comparable implementations of Japanese colonial power. Indeed, it was with its first colony that Japan honed policies that it would later implement in Korea. A policy of full assimilation is inherently incompatible with an ideology that postulates a hierarchical relationship based upon a perceived fundamental racial difference between the coloniser and its colonial subjects. At its most idealist, Japanese colonial policy envisioned a future in which the Koreans, through their adoption of Japanese culture, would be indistinguishable from their 'natural' Japanese counterparts, and would be subject to the same rights and laws. While Japanese and Korean subjects received vastly different treatment by the state during the occupation, if Japanese colonial rhetoric was to be believed, this hierarchy would be

dismantled once the Koreans had adopted Japanese culture to the requisite extent. Had the criteria around which this hierarchy was constructed been attributes considered to be inherent, natural and permanent, such as racial identity was at the time, such hopes for the future would be untenable. Colonial Koreans were still regarded as inferior within the discourse of Japanese colonialism, although this was represented as a result of centuries of poor governance and cultural underdevelopment rather than due to inherent racial characteristics.⁶⁴ Colonial discourse constructed a new form of discrimination that 'strongly denounced ethnic or racial discrimination and gestured towards inclusion', whilst at the same time denigrating the Korean cultural character and insisting that they 'catch up' to their metropolitan Japanese counterparts.⁶⁵

What differentiated the Koreans from the Japanese therefore was their history and their culture, their national identity as Koreans. For colonisation to succeed according to this rhetoric, what was required was more than just a colonisation of the material realm of the Korean Peninsula; it needed to include a colonisation of the consciousnesses of its inhabitants. This process of 'imperial subjectivisation' (*kominka*) conducted by the authorities took four principal forms, religious reforms that supplanted existing religions with Shinto, educational reforms that emphasised Japanisation of the colonial subject and Japanese language education, the replacement of Korean names with Japanised ones, and the enlistment of Korean subjects in the Japanese military.⁶⁶ Given that these policies were enacted in order to transform the psychologies of the colonised subjects, it is difficult to objectively quantify the extent to which these endeavours was successful. Although many of these processes were only implemented from the 1930s onwards, and were abruptly cut short by the immediate fall of the Japanese empire following its defeat in

World War II, there is a proliferation of evidence to demonstrate that there was an increasing integration of Korean subjects into the Japanese national body. Figures show sharp rises in the number of Koreans attending Shinto shrines, the number of Japanese-Korean intermarriages, and importantly, the number of Koreans who had mastered basic conversation in Japanese.⁶⁷ In 1938 the Japanese Army began to accept Korean volunteers, and by 1943, the year before conscription was enforced, nearly 17,000 Koreans had been enlisted, with a further 3,000 plus joining the navy. These soldiers served in the same units as their mainland Japanese counterparts.⁶⁸

The outbreak of war, and the concurrent demands for devout imperial subjects, ensured that what was initially postulated as a slow and gradual process of imperialisation was forced to escalate substantially, and as such the position of colonial Koreans underwent a change in the imperial mindset. During the period of wartime mobilisation, colonial discourse predominantly espoused the equality of Koreans and metropolitan Japanese, both at the official level and in the material directed towards imperial subjects of all descriptions.⁶⁹ Fujitani traces this shift as part of a transition from 'vulgar' to 'polite' racism, in which the former is 'exclusionary', 'inhumane' and 'naturalistic in its understanding of difference', towards a mode which is 'inclusionary', 'humane' and 'more culturalist in its understanding of difference'.⁷⁰ Yet the transition between these two poles is far from linear, and if we bear in mind that even in the final years of the colonial government the state was still struggling to effectively quantify its colonial subjects,⁷¹ a picture emerges of Japanese power that is unevenly distributed and internally conflicted. The colonial subject is simultaneously self and other, inherently culturally inferior, yet perfectly able to adopt Japanese culture, physically inferior and yet capable of serving alongside the Japanese in

the theatres of war. There were clearly substantial material differences in the ways in which Koreans and metropolitan Japanese subjects experienced colonialism, yet the repeated and insistent pronouncements of equality between the two groups did, in and of themselves, have an ideological impact. The final stage of Korea's colonial experience therefore was marked by a breakdown in the rigid boundaries that encircles 'Japaneseness', a fact that clearly caused consternation amongst the 'eugenically minded researchers in the Ministry of Health and Welfare'.⁷²

Once Upon A Time, set during the final days of Korea's colonial experience, potently demonstrates the results of imperialisation upon the consciousness of its Korean characters. National identity, be it Korean or Japanese, is revealed as a subject position that one can adopt, and one which emerges as a result of, and is transformed by, different power dynamics. The narrative revolves around the attempts of a number of characters to obtain 'The Light of the East', a gigantic and supposedly mythical diamond that has been unearthed by a Japanese General in the colonial Korean administration. The diamond is stolen by a masked master criminal, Haedanghwa, before it can be sent back to Japan, setting in motion a massive police operation to retrieve it. This motif of a mask, and the ability of the characters to adopt disguises and inhabit new identities infuses the whole film.

The lead protagonist, Kanemura is described in the film as a Japanese businessman from Osaka with ties to the military. His main source of income appears to be the selling of Korean historical artefacts on the black market to wealthy Japanese characters, establishing Kanemura as a colonialist, come from the mainland to reap the colony's resources for his own personal gain. In his first scene, we see him enter a bar, confidently striding past a sign that

states 'Dogs and Koreans Prohibited' and being warmly greeted by the manager, assuring the audience that he is neither a dog nor a Korean.⁷³ The clandestine nature of his business dealings mean that he is versatile with disguises, able to subtly change his appearance and identity to present the appropriate image to his clients. While usually dressed in a modern, westernised style, he creates characters that speak both Korean and Japanese, and at one point disguises himself as a Japanese soldier. The revelation that Kanemura is in fact a secret agent, named Oh Bong-gu, working for the Korean resistance illustrates how intangible the distinction between Japanese and Korean had become by this phase in the imperial project. Kanemura is able to swing between the two greatest extremes, the Korean resistance fighter and the exploitative Japanese colonialist, without hesitation. If colonialist discourse positioned the difference between the occupiers and their subjects as a matter of acculturation, Kaneda's ability to pass as both points to the artifice of such positions.

Similarly, Haruko, (Korean name Choon-ja), the Jazz singer in the aforementioned bar, is able to adopt Korean or Japanese identities as easily as she is able to put on Haedanghwa's mask. Having stolen the diamond, Haruko dresses up as a geisha, that most emblematic figure of Japaneseness, and boards a train to Russia. Whilst on-board she is apprehended by Kanemura, in his Japanese soldier disguise. Kanemura greets her in Korean, and she responds, in Japanese, that he must have the wrong person. As the camera cuts between them, we see both Haruko/Choon-ja and Kanemura/Bong-gu's faces half obscured by shadows. The allusion here is to the duality of their identities, facets of which they are able to turn on or off at will. Instead of embracing her sliding position on the spectrum between Japanese and Korean

identities however, Haruko chooses to position herself beyond the dialectic entirely. Having kidnapped her in an attempt to reclaim the diamond, Bong-gu appeals to Choon-ja to hand over the stone on the basis of their shared national identity. Choon-ja rejects being described as a Korean, and says that she prefers to be known as Haruko, as Choon-ja is 'so old-fashioned', once again linking modernity to the forces of colonialism. When told that she cannot become Japanese by denying that she is a Korean, she likewise rejects her Japanese identity. As a child of the intermarriage between Korean and Japanese parents, Haruko should embody the culmination of the assimilationist philosophy of Japanese colonialism; instead she rejects the essentialism of either identity, as well as the space between them, choosing instead to flee the conflict for a life in Russia.

There are multiple examples across the body of films set in the colonial period of ethnic Koreans who have been able to adopt Japanese identities for their own advantage. However, colonialism is not a one-way transfer of knowledge and power in which the colonised are transformed and the coloniser remains untouched. The narrative of assimilation can flow both ways, as demonstrated by declarations that the Japanese in Korea should consider that land their 'native place' and consider themselves *chosenjin* (a Korean person).⁷⁴ We can see this reciprocity of identity transition in Kang Je-gyu's film *My Way*.

My Way narrates the story of the lifelong rivalry between Kim Jun-shik and Hasegawa Tatsuo, who first meet as children when the latter arrives with his family in the colony, and who find themselves in constant conflict throughout the course of their lives. After a complex series of events which sees both characters serve consecutively in the Japanese, Soviet and Nazi militaries during the Second World War, Jun-shik and Tatsuo eventually find themselves

on the beaches of Normandy during the D-Day landings. As the Allied bombs rain down, Jun-shik is fatally wounded. With his dying breath, he instructs Tatsuo to take over his identity, swapping over their dog-tags in the hope that this might ensure better treatment for him from his allied captors. The film is bookended by scenes showing Jun-shik running a marathon in the post-war years. The finale reveals that it is in fact Tatsuo running, and he has, as instructed, become Jun-shik. This move turns the assimilationist rhetoric on its head, eroding the philosophy of Japanese superiority from which it drew its impetus and yet simultaneously reinforcing the deconstruction of national identity that it necessitated.

While the ability of characters to seamlessly transition between Japanese and Korean subject positions is frequently deployed in these films as a way for these characters to subvert and frustrate Japanese colonialism (such as has been discussed in *Once Upon A Time*), there are a range of characters depicted across this selection of Korean films whose ability to appear as Japanese is utilised in the service of their colonial masters. The practicalities of controlling a colonised population with a comparatively small number of colonial administrators from the metropole dictates that colonial powers the world over have relied upon a cadre of sympathetic locals to join the lower positions of the colonial apparatus. Ultimately these figures have been viewed as collaborators, a designation often receiving more ire than even the foreign colonial agents. The legacy of such collaboration in the post-war era is returned to in chapters four and five of this thesis, and it remains to this day one of the most contested aspects of Korea's postcolonial experience. However, here, rather than address the political or moral consequences of such actions, I wish to look at how the seamless integration of Koreans into the forces of Japanese colonial power,

and more importantly how this integration has been depicted in contemporary cinema, de-centres national identity as the defining element of the colonial experience. I follow Fujitani in his assertion that 'the weak term "collaborator" is insufficient for naming subjects so actively involved in figuring the contours of Japanese national/colonial discourse.'⁷⁵ Through their embodiment of its assimilationist principles, they became active agents within the colonialist rhetoric, 'pushing the universalist or at least inclusionary dimension of Japanese nationalism as far as they could in order to locate themselves solidly within it.'⁷⁶

In *Once Upon a Time* the audience is introduced to the three main figures in the Japanese colonial police force which is attempting to recover the stolen diamond; Inspector Hasegawa, the Chief of Police Suzimura, and the head of the Military Police, Colonel Yamada. The lowest in this chain of command is Hasegawa, and we first see him interrogating a restrained suspect in the scene discussed in the previous chapter. In spite of the fact that Hasegawa is the only colonial officer we see who doesn't wear a Japanese uniform, in this interrogation scene a strong sense of opposition is created between him and his Korean prisoner. Hasegawa starts by declaring that his suspect is related to Ahn Jung-geun, the resistance fighter who assassinated Itō Hirobumi and who served as a figure of national pride for the Korean resistance and future nationalist governments. When his suspect points out that Ahn Jung-geun, whom Hasegawa describes as a terrorist and a murderer, is from a different family that just shares his surname, Hasegawa declares 'Who cares? You're all the same compatriots'. Finally, Hasegawa beats his suspect to elicit a confession. The division between Hasegawa and his suspect here is clear: his condemnation of Ahn Jung-geun, his use of the second person form of address and counting himself out of the group of compatriots that both Ahns

belong to, establishes, alongside his clearly Japanese name, Hasegawa as Japanese. As if to enhance this, his beating of the restrained suspect provides a visual metaphor for the unjust power relationships of colonialism.

The tables are turned however when Hasegawa makes his report to Suzimura, during which he is chastised for manufacturing confessions instead of capturing the real suspect and reclaiming the stolen goods. 'That's why you Koreans will never get anywhere!' declares Suzimura. This one line identifies Hasegawa as a Korean, and his downcast expression demonstrates that he considers this a reprimand. Suzimura, in full colonial police uniform and standing in front of the imperial flag, serves as the voice of Japanese authority, and his final sneering word, *Chosenjin*, does as much to put Hasegawa in his place as did Hasegawa's beating of his suspect.

This encounter however is far from the last time that a character is revealed to be different to what the audience is first led to believe. After Haedanghwa steals *The Light of the East*, Suzimura and Yamada clash over who has jurisdiction to investigate the crime. When Suzimura threatens to arrest him, Yamada responds incredulously, 'A Korean dares arrest me?'. Like Hasegawa before him, Suzimura is exposed as a Korean by a superior figure. Suzimura at first seems ready to question Yamada's accusation, but the revelation of his Korean name silences him.

Finally, in this chain of events, Yamada goes to visit the General. Here he is informed that the war has turned against Japan and that he is an officer of a defeated nation. 'Not only that', the General adds, 'you're a Korean', and in order to emphasise the shock of this revelation there is a deep bass thud on the score. Their ensuing conversation, in which Yamada protests against this accusation, does much to indicate the imprecise nature of national identities

under colonialism. Testaments emerge rapidly, with Yamada claiming that his is Japanese down to his bones, to which the General responds that his 'spirit' may be Japanese, but his 'blood' is Korean. Angered now, Yamada launches into one of the few Japanese sections of dialogue in the film, declaring his Japanese name and his rank in the imperial army whilst standing at attention.

Escalating through the ranks, supposedly 'Japanese' figures of authority have been revealed to be Koreans, a fact that they had clearly kept secret from their subordinates. In doing so, the film forces us to ask what exactly it meant to 'be Korean' under Japanese occupation? This is not to ask solely what it would have been like to live in a colonised nation, but how colonisation, especially the assimilationist approach pursued by Japan, breaks down the borders of classification, ensuring that 'being' Korean, or indeed being Japanese, are contestable states. How might we understand being Japanese down to your bones, or of having 'Korean blood'?

Once Upon a Time is set in a time in which Korea had already experienced thirty-five years of absolute colonisation by the Japanese. Although no ages are given for any of the characters in the film, a great number of them would appear to be approximately this age or younger. By what virtue then may these characters be considered Korean? Colonisation ensured that Korea ceased to exist in 1910, instead becoming the Japanese state of *Chōsen*. These characters have spent at the very least the majority of their lives as Japanese citizens, and all of these figures would have been brought up amongst institutions which would have constructed and defined them as subjects of the Japanese empire.⁷⁷ These characters are perceived by the audience to be Japanese, until they are revealed not to be, and with the exception of language, they are not shown to exhibit any traits coded as

'Korean'.⁷⁸ By establishing this hierarchy from which characters are relegated once they are revealed as Korean, the binary division between coloniser and colonised is enforced, whilst simultaneously being shown to be an artifice. These officials are only forced to adopt the subject position of colonised Koreans, coded here as submissive and subservient, when interpellated as such by a higher power in the colonial administration.

Yamada embodies the imperialisation enacted by the Japanese administration upon its colonial subjects through the enlisting of Koreans in the Japanese military, either as volunteers or as conscripts. By speaking in Japanese and demonstrating his status as a Japanese soldier in response to being declared a Korean, Yamada *performs* Japaneseness. If the rhetoric of assimilation declared that acceptance into the Japanese national body was dependent upon the colonised becoming Japanese, Yamada's performance serves as a request to be admitted.

In the previous chapter I discussed the ways in which the sexual slavery of Korean girls during the war has been used in Korean cinema to demonstrate the inhuman brutality of the Japanese forces. However, by demonstrating the ways in which the colonial period problematises simplistic definitions such as 'Korean' and 'Japanese', these colonial history films also suggest that the association between the two nations and the positions of victim and aggressor are equally complicated. In *Spirit's Homecoming* we are introduced to a Korean girl, captured and forced into the role of a comfort woman, who has been driven insane by her experiences. The final act which cemented her madness, we see in a flashback, occurred when her brother's military unit visited the 'comfort station'. We watch the girl as she herself watches, distraught, the brutal beating of her brother by other members of his unit. In the aftermath, we are told, she

refers to all of the Japanese soldiers as her brother and gets excited when she sees them.

Beyond the depiction here of yet another act of aggression by those coded as 'Japanese' against those established as 'Korean' lies a far more troubling revelation. Korean girls were brutally abused by soldiers in the Japanese military, and at this point in history the military contained a substantial number of Korean colonial subjects. Just as *Once Upon A Time* revealed that the dialectic of Japanese/Korean violence was in fact being committed by Koreans upon each other, *Spirit's Homecoming* suggests that Koreans, here in the process of becoming Japanese, were complicit in one of the most violent acts of colonial aggression. The Korean girl's misrecognition in the wake of her trauma serves to make the allusion clear. She is no longer able to distinguish between Korean ally and Japanese aggressor. Indeed, the suggestion is that these women may well have been abused by both Korean and Japanese men, and to them the difference is negligible.

Complicating Colonial Representations

This chapter has examined a range of ways in which contemporary South Korean films have presented a view of the colonial period that challenges the simple categorisations that until recently had been dominant in the discourse surrounding the period. Instead of narratives of Korean subjugation and suffering in the face of Japanese aggression, more nuanced viewpoints have emerged which have found more than merely trauma from within this contested segment of the nation's history. This is not to say that the suffering of the Korean people has been absent in these texts, but that this narrative of

suffering is no longer the only defining framework through which the period is viewed.

Instead, what emerges is a depiction of Korea's colonial experience in which emphasises the negotiations and compromises of everyday life, in which individual desires are weighed against the demands of nationalism. By so closely associating modernity and modernisation, qualities viewed in a positive light, with Japanese colonialism, these films inevitably end up suggesting that there were positive aspects to Korea's colonial experience. The films discussed above present a version of modernity in which colonial subjects were able to become active agents in the modernisation of the nation, a fact which required them to acquiesce to their colonial masters. Instead of criticising them for this however, the films emphasise the appeal of modernity above and beyond the appeal of the nationalist agenda. A contemporary audience is invited to identify with characters for whom politics and the resistance are less substantial concerns compared to their own personal desires. Likewise, I have demonstrated that the challenges that these characters face are related to contemporary concerns. By bridging the division of time between the colonial period and today, filmmakers have provided an avenue through which a contemporary audience can understand the colonial period beyond an abstract framework of resistance and collaboration, and instead see themselves in the characters.

More challenging to the paradigm of resistance and collaboration that has previously dominated discussions of this period are the ways in which these films have internalised the colonial doctrine of assimilation, and in doing so have contested and deconstructed the borders that separated coloniser/colonised and Japanese/Korean citizens. Contemporary Korean

cinema has depicted the modernisation of consciousness that occurred during the modernisation of the peninsula and have broken down conceptions of fixed and intransient subject positions, instead embracing a fluidity of identity. This has been depicted through characters who have internalised and embodied an identity at odds with their 'natural' one so completely that they are unable to adjust when their adopted identity is stripped from them, such as Yamada in *Once Upon a Time*. Rather than reasserting the inevitability of this 'natural' identity, this scene demonstrates the artifice inherent in any conception of an identity defined by rigid demarcations. The existence of characters who can become 'Japanese' or 'Korean' at will further erodes these boundaries. By echoing the assertions of the colonial government that one could become Japanese through a process of imperialisation, these films demonstrate the absurdity of trying to preserve a sense of national identity with an assimilationist colonial doctrine. Contemporary Korean colonial history films challenge a narrative of Korean oppression and Japanese aggression by questioning the validity of either national designation.

Finally, these films encourage an audience to address the question of Korean culpability in the atrocities of the colonial period. By becoming active in the process of modernisation, by becoming Imperial subjects, by becoming Japanese, ethnically Korean figures became complicit in acts of aggression against their fellow citizens. By depicting characters who traverse the borders of national identity, they also depict the crossing of the line that divides victim and aggressor, us and them. While a nuanced view of the colonial period will reveal that there was more to this history than acts of brutality and aggression, and that elements from this period that influenced the forming of contemporary Korean identity can be reclaimed, it also makes us realise that we can no longer

comfortably apportion blame for the atrocities that were committed solely at the feet of the coloniser.

Chapter 3

Arirang and the Healing of *Han*¹

Having discussed the ways in which contemporary South Korean cinema has engaged with a very specific historical trauma, namely the colonial period, through its representation on screen, the remainder of this thesis will expand upon this focus to demonstrate the ways in which the colonial period is invoked rather than directly recalled, as well as looking more broadly at the idea of traumatic memory in South Korean films. This expansion in scope is driven by my examination of the films set in the colonial period, as it is through following the traces of this history in these texts that connections to the wider body of South Korean cinema are illuminated. In this chapter I shall investigate the concept of *han*, which in many ways is an adoption of collective trauma as a cultural marker, and how this sentiment intertwines with the traditional folk song Arirang. In looking at a number of Arirang's appearances within films from across the history of Korean cinema, I demonstrate how the song has adopted a significant amount of historical and symbolic baggage, meaning that inclusion of the song within the body of a film brings with it particular resonance.

Towards a Definition of *Han*

Trauma as a term once primarily referred to a physical blow, and it is only in recent decades that the concept has been applied to psychological stresses, and in particular the responses to these psychological stresses. Over time, this psychological use of the trauma diagnosis has been expanded to include not only those who have experienced discrete traumatic events but also those whose lives include proportionally higher amounts of prolonged stress, for

example women, the poor and ethnic minorities. While this broadening out of the applicability of trauma can be helpful in that it grants a framework with which to interrogate a wider range of issues, allowing us to shift focus from the particular to the everyday and to consider often overlooked sections of society, it also simultaneously risks diluting the definition of trauma as a whole. For if everyone may be, to a greater or lesser extent, a victim of trauma, what benefit can this diagnosis bring?

It is this question I have struggled with in attempting to integrate existing theories of trauma with the reaction of Korean filmmakers to the colonial period. Whilst trauma theory provides a methodological approach for analysing films which directly confront traumatic events, I am hesitant to suggest that an entire nation is suffering from a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder related to the colonial period, especially considering the fact that many filmmakers and members of the Korean audiences who watch their films are now likely to be generations removed from the event. In chapter one I introduced the concepts of 'cultural trauma' and 'limit events' as approaches through which to address this topic. Here, however, I will discuss how the Korean notion of *han* becomes a particularly promising concept with which to engage with this same question.

The word *han* itself is notoriously untranslatable. James K. Freda points out that while a Korean-English dictionary translates the word as 'grudge, resentment, rancour', '*han* is typically *not* translated for this robs it of its culturally imbedded meaning'.² *Han* is 'traditionally associated with a complex mix of rather negative emotions such as frustrated desire, resentment, regret and a sense of loss and sorrow.'³ Important in differentiating *han* from trauma is the idea that while *han* is experienced by the individual, and often equated with

personal sorrows, an individual's experience is seen as a microcosm of a greater cultural sense of sadness.

Han shares much with the notion of a collective trauma discussed in the preceding chapter, but divests it of its connection to particular traumatic incidents experienced by individuals, instead focusing upon how incidents on a national level might build up and be felt collectively by those throughout the society. According to Kim Yol-kyu, *han* is experienced by Korean people as 'the collective trauma and the memories of sufferings imposed upon them in the name of oppression over the course of the nation's five-thousand-odd years of history'.⁴ Regardless as to whether one attributes the build-up of *han* as occurring over years, centuries or millennia, the term embodies this notion of accumulation. Previous tragedies are compounded by those that followed, in essence creating a narrative in which Koreans have suffered a seemingly endless series of horrible events, believed to be out of their control and brought about by foreign powers. *Han* is transmitted across generations, through family histories, through narratives and through traditional artistic practices that have allowed people to express their sorrow. In the past century, the cinema, as a prominent example of mass media, has played a significant role in the transmission of *han*.

The interplay between the collective and the individual is of utmost importance in relation to my use of the term *han* throughout this project. Freda discusses how discourse on *han* within Korea developed in two main phases, revolving around two different but entwined emotions. The first of these, *chônghan*, indicates 'a mild sentimental form of resentment, a bitter sweet longing', which can in many cases 'reflect the pain of separation' and 'the ambivalent emotions evoked when betrayed by a lover'.⁵ *Chônghan* therefore is

an emotion experienced predominantly on a personal level, and is a feeling that mixes both sadness and nostalgia. The second aspect of the discourse on *han* is *wôghan*, 'a more forceful, repressed grudge that can explode for ill or well'.⁶ Scholarship on this aspect of *han* expanded as part of the *minjung* movement in the 1970s as a response to the oppressive policies of the Park Chun-hee regime (1963-1979).⁷ This evocation of *han* in the 1970s was 'profoundly aware of a history of injustice and suffering, activated in the present by more of the same'.⁸ In contrast to *chônghan* then, *wôghan* is considered a deeper, more aggressive and potentially more violent form of sorrow. This aspect of *han*, whilst perfectly applicable to individuals, is powerfully applied at a communal, national level. The term's appropriation by protesters during the reign of the military government demonstrated an awareness that oppression of the people is not a new phenomenon and, in drawing upon the concept of *han*, it invoked a history of suffering by the Korean people as a factor in explaining the current conflict, which in turn compounds a build-up of feelings of communal grief.

Combining these two constituent aspects of *han* into one overall sensibility provides one then with a definition of the emotion as combining both sorrow and anger, experienced simultaneously at a personal and cultural level (meaning that individual sorrows come to be seen as reflecting, and being influenced by, the fate of the Korean nation), that sees the travails of the present as emerging out of the conflicts of the past, in an unbroken chain of cause and effect.

Finally, *han* is not simply about an endless build-up of collective sorrow, but also contains the notion of a cathartic release. '*Han*, however, does not seek to be purged through acts of revenge, but through ethical and artistic transcendence', writes Jung-Shoon Shim.⁹ The concept of *han* contains within

itself 'the opposing operations of *pumtta* and *pultta* – much like the English usages of harbouring and releasing a grudge'.¹⁰ This 'release' from *han* is a particularly vague conception, and should not be equated with the notion of a cure. Whereas the goal in the treatment of trauma victims is to allow them to integrate the traumatic experience into the subject's own conscious knowledge, the traumatic events at the root of *han* are not so much repressed as not fully explored or investigated. Thus, *han* functions differently from trauma as it does not result from such a decisive split between 'history' and 'knowledge', and so cannot be annulled with the integration of these two factors. If there is a conceivable 'end' to feelings of *han*, it lies in a distant utopia in which the Korean people are no longer subjected to the wills of foreign masters, the nation is once again peacefully unified and apologies are made by former occupiers for atrocities committed.

If not 'cured' or 'removed' then, feelings of *han* may at least be relieved, as it is often understood that expressions of *han* contain the potential to purge oneself of the sentiment. Thus, the traditional Korean arts have risen to significance in discourses surrounding *han*, as they are conceived of as a specifically Korean way of addressing this most Korean of emotions. In this project, I do not intend to approach the representation of *han* across the entire range of Korean cinematic culture; instead I hope to examine a Korean folk song, Arirang, and through a brief explanation of its history alongside a focused examination of its use in a trio of contemporary South Korean films, (which are contextualised in relation to two key antecedents) to demonstrate how Arirang, and South Korean cinema, have been used to express feelings of both personal and national sorrow, and in doing so seek to ease the torment that they cause.

A Song of Sorrow

The foremost difficulty when engaging with Arirang as an object of study is the multiplicity of versions in which the song circulates. The name Arirang, at least technically, should not refer to any one song, but instead as ‘a collective name for the songs with ‘*arirang*’, ‘*arari*’ and other such words in the refrain’.¹¹

According to Kang Eun-gyong, there are around 2,000 individual pieces and 50 types of Arirang songs which can be categorised according to a number of shared melodies.¹² E. Taylor Atkins therefore argues that Arirang should perhaps be thought of ‘less as a *song* than as a *skeletal framework* for musical and poetic articulation’.¹³

The word ‘arirang’ itself in this instance then would seem to be of the utmost importance, given that it is this alone that unites such a substantial number of distinctive musical pieces. One theory as to the etymology of the word, which in and of itself has no real meaning, posits that Arirang derives from ‘*aranim*’, meaning ‘my beautiful lover’.¹⁴ This claim is however overwhelmed by the larger body of scholarship regarding Arirang which sees the refrain as *youn*, ‘excess sound carrying no particular meaning’.¹⁵ Arirang, therefore, in its strictest definition, is a song with no set lyrics or melodic structure, based upon a word with no real meaning.

Despite the almost limitless possible variations of Arirang, a number of conventions came to categorise uses of the song. First of these is that the verse/refrain structure became aligned with individual/collective singing respectively. That is to say that the verses, which may well be improvised, were interspersed with a refrain, initially established by the performer, which was then sung collectively by the audience. Secondly, Arirangs have a tendency to share a similar emotional state. While the malleability of the song has allowed for

Arirang to express any number of possible themes, overwhelmingly it has tended towards performances of sadness. Atkins states that Arirangs have 'articulated the sorrows of lovers parting, the injustices of life for common people, the nostalgia for one's hometown, the disorientation experienced during periods of dramatic change, or the resolve to persevere and conquer oppression'.¹⁶ This description is heavily reminiscent of the emotions associated with the feeling of *han* discussed previously. To further demonstrate the association of Arirang with *han* I wish now to look at the most widely circulated version of the song, known as the '*Bonjo*' (original) or 'Seoul' Arirang, particularly demonstrating how this version, and by extension Arirang as a whole, came to be popularised during, and associated with, the colonial era.

While some versions of Arirang are alleged to have existed for close to six hundred years, the Seoul Arirang is believed to have appeared in the late 1800s. A persuasive argument regarding the formation of the song is that this version stems from the rebuilding of Gyeongbok palace which took place between 1865 -1868.¹⁷ The palace, built in 1395, was the historical home of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1897).¹⁸ The palace was burnt down during the Japanese invasion of the Korean peninsula in 1592 and was only rebuilt at the order of King Gojong in 1868, when it once again became the monarch's residence and site of the royal court.¹⁹ The rebuilding of the palace was a large-scale operation and mobilised workers from across the peninsula. Kim Youn-gap claims that these workers were 'encouraged to sing and dance every day so that they might forget homesickness and the weariness of forced labour'.²⁰ Here, different regional variations of Arirang would have come into contact, influencing each other to some extent and ensuring that 'local' songs would have developed some regional influences, whilst also allowing for the creation

of a modern, hybridised form of Arirang. Not only does this melting pot of regional folk songs help to account for the similarities inherent to the different permutations of Arirang, but it also relates the song to the experience of Japanese aggression, a theme which continues throughout the next century.

The version which emerged at this time, helpfully recorded by H. B. Hulbert, an American missionary in 1896, is based upon a two-line refrain and a two-line verse structure. The first line of the refrain follows the traditional '*arirang arirang arariyo*' lyrics, followed by a second line which translates as 'I am going over the Arirang hill'.²¹ Arirang hill itself is a fictional location and, as with the song itself, is able to embody whatever meaning required of it by the singer. Thus, the mountain pass can come to signify any obstacle needing to be overcome or task that needs accomplishing. Lee Chyung-mun writes however that in traditional Korean society a mountain pass would have been regarded as the boundary of a village and that the crossing of the pass would mean farewell.²² Therefore the song Arirang developed connotations of one leaving their hometown, and in turn feelings of parting, sorrow and nostalgia. Arirang enabled the articulation of *han* in respect to these emotions.

Given the innate imprecision of Arirang in both form and content, it is perhaps surprising that the song has come to hold the place that it does in contemporary Korean culture, as well as its connections to certain specific emotions or sentiments. I propose that during the Japanese occupation, *han* and Arirang were brought together in a way which has fundamentally impacted all future uses of the song. This is not to say the popularity of one version of Arirang nor even the dominance of a certain emotional register has eradicated the possibilities of alternatives. Given the numerous versions of the song that circulate to this day, this is demonstrably not the case. It was during the colonial

period however that the Seoul Arirang, importantly also known as the 'original' Arirang, became so widely popular and established as the master Arirang to which all others are referenced or compared. Fittingly, for this project, the intersection of Arirang, *han* and Japanese colonialism took place in the cinema.

***Arirang* (1926) and the Colonial Period**

In 1926, Nah Un-gyu directed the film *Arirang*. It would be difficult to overstate the esteem with which this film is held within Korean film history, a fact that is echoed by the high public profile of the film. In 2002, Kyung Hyun Kim described *Arirang* as 'one of the most popular films Korea has ever produced', and that it was 'widely known as Korea's first nationalist film'.²³ The film also marks the beginning of what many refer to as 'the Golden Age' of silent Korean cinema, which lasted until the coming of sound and harsher Japanese censorship. Initially released in 1926, the film continued to be re-released throughout the 1920s and 30s, as well as after the liberation in 1945. The last recorded screening is in 1952, in the midst of the Korean War in the town of Daegoo, during which the film is believed to be lost.²⁴ The film now survives only in a few photographs, anecdotal reports and contemporary newspaper reviews or commentary, yet this lack of an actual text to examine appears to have not diminished its importance.

The story of the film concerns Yongjin, a young man from the countryside who had been educated in Seoul. Somehow driven insane, he now lives back in his hometown with his father, and sister, Younghee. Towards the end of the film a festival is held to celebrate the harvest, during which Giho, an informant for the Japanese police, sneaks into Younghee's house and tries to rape her. Yongjin sees this and is suddenly gripped by a hallucination, during which he

lashes out with a sickle, killing Giho. Yongjin is then arrested by the Japanese and carried away, back over the hills.²⁵

The loss of the film in many ways enhances its mythical status. Despite the numerous accolades that surround the film regarding its support of the Korean resistance movement, the actual extent to which the film was anti-Japanese is arguable. Jooyeon Rhee makes a persuasive argument that the nationalistic status of the film is something that has been ascribed to it by politically motivated parties in the immediate post-colonial era.²⁶ Important to consider in this regard is the fact that the film was originally released in its entirety, despite the fact that many other films of the time had suffered at the hands of the Japanese censors.²⁷ If, as many accounts claim, the film directly linked Yongjin's madness to the actions of the Japanese occupiers, it is unlikely that it would have evaded the attention of the colonial administrators.

Interestingly, a 'cinema novel'²⁸, published in 1929, does not equate Yongjin's madness with his arrest by the Japanese police; this instead emerges from a surviving version of the script from North Korea.²⁹ The variations in accounts of the scenario of *Arirang*, and therefore its narrative and the extent of its political commentary, are attributable to the fact that silent films in colonial Korea had the potential to provide dramatically different experiences, dependent upon which screening the spectator attended. This was due to the presence of the *byeonsa*, a film narrator, who 'explained and interpreted the images on screen', providing narratives and dialogue.³⁰ Japanese officials 'tried to censor *byeonsa* performances by carefully examining their scripts along with the film text in advance, but there was never an absolute guarantee that a *byeonsa* would adhere to the approved scripts'.³¹ The *byeonsa* therefore stood as powerful mediators between a film and its audience, and their performances

would clearly influence the reception of the narrative. Therefore, it was perfectly possible for the *byeonsa* at a given screening, provided that there were no Japanese police in the theatre, to assert that Yongjin's madness was caused by the torture he experienced during his arrest following the March 1st Independence Movement.³²

Although the Japanese censors took no issue with *Arirang* itself, the inclusion of the title song at the end appears to have posed a problem. As Yongjin is taken away by the police, he is shown to be singing Arirang, and a recording would have been played in the cinemas. The lyrics to the song were printed on fliers given out at the cinema, although 'some holes were punched on the flier to erase certain words' by the censors.³³ Reports from screenings of *Arirang* often highlight the fact that the audience, having been swept along by the film, and in particular by the performance of the *byeonsa*, all sang along to the song Arirang.³⁴

The popularity of the film ensured that Arirang would have been heard across Korea. Through its association with Na's film, therefore, a version of Arirang, which had been formed as an amalgamation of folk songs from across the peninsula, was broadcast back across the nation.³⁵ This version of the song became emblematic of the nationalist, anti-colonial discourse that encircled the contexts of reception of *Arirang*, ensuring that the song itself was seen by many as being anti-colonial. This can be attributed to both the message and the structure of Arirang. During the colonial period, a number of explicitly 'anti-Japanese' Arirangs, known as *hangil* Arirang, circulated. These *hangil* Arirang, which could only exist in oral form until after the liberation, took the form of songs lamenting the miseries of peasant farmers and migrant workers, as well as urging revolutionary armed resistance.³⁶ The loose structure of Arirang

allowed for the song to be 'recast as a medium for vernacular resistance to Japanese imperialism', or become, as Kim Shi-op evocatively terms it, 'an underground broadcast'.³⁷

The existence, and survival, of Arirang eventually became encoded with multiple layers of resistance against Japanese colonialism. As the Japanese occupation reached its later stages, and the policies of *Naisen Ittai* (Japan-Korea as one body) or *Kominka* (imperialisation) were implemented on the peninsula, use of the Korean language itself became an act of insurrection. With Korean language and culture becoming increasingly prohibited, the tenacity and persistence of Arirang became a potent national symbol. In turning now to look at specific examples of the use of Arirang within Korean cinema, I will first explore how Im Kwon-taek's *Seopyeonje* uses Arirang in a widely celebrated scene to address a Korean society in the midst of a fundamental change.

***Seopyeonje* and the Persistence of Arirang**

Seopyeonje emerges at a moment when both Korean cinema, and the traditional culture which the film depicts, were coming under greater and greater threat. The narrative follows the story of an itinerant *p'ansori* performer and the two children he attempts to train in this art form. *P'ansori* is a traditional form of performance narrative that features a singer accompanied by a percussionist who beats out a rhythm on a barrel-shaped drum. The film was released in 1993, a year in which local films accounted for only 15.9 percent of the domestic market, making this the worst year on record for the Korean film industry since its revival in the mid 1950s.³⁸ The film however went on to

achieve huge success, becoming the first Korean film to ever break the one million admissions mark in Seoul.³⁹

The film industry was not the only aspect of the Korean arts that was struggling at that time, yet Im's film is also attributed with leading to a revival, not only of *p'ansori*, but of other aspects of traditional Korean culture.⁴⁰ The importance of 1993 as a turning point for the popularity of both Korean cinema and the traditional Korean arts is tied to the fact that this was the year in which the country returned to civilian rule after decades of military dictatorships which had held almost uninterrupted power since the formation of the republic in 1948. *Seopyeonje* tapped into the anxiety that was felt in the wake of such a fundamental change and provoked discussions about 'the future of Korean society and the dangers of it losing its cultural roots'.⁴¹ This film, along with a great deal of Im's later work, addresses the place of Korean tradition in the modern nation, demonstrating both its persistence and arguing for these arts as fundamental constituents of a Korean society, as well as of individual Korean identity. Im has been quoted as saying that it is his desire to 'capture elements of our [Korean] traditional culture' in his work in the face of a 'more aggressive', international culture. His fear is that aspects of Korean culture not in keeping with this global culture might eventually 'disappear'.⁴² This theme, the place of traditional Korean culture in a modernising world, I argue is expressed most strikingly in *Seopyeonje* through the use of Arirang in a single scene towards the middle of the film.⁴³

The segment in question is a single take with a very slight zoom, lasting five minutes and described by the assistant-director Kim Hong-joon as one of the most famous shots in Korean cinema.⁴⁴ At this point in the narrative the *p'ansori* performer Yu-bong, his daughter Song-hwa and adopted step-son

Dong-ho have just been evicted from the room in which they were living. They face rising debts, an unsure future and the knowledge that the popularity of *p'ansori* is declining rapidly.

The scene begins as an extreme long shot of the three principal characters, who are walking down a long winding path along the side of a hill towards the camera. (Figure 3.1) It is a highly rural scene: besides the three characters the only evidence of mankind are the dry-stone walls and metal gates which line the path and divide the countryside into fields. It is a view that might have remained unchanged for decades. The function of the landscape in this scene appears not to be one of spectacle, despite the director's tendency to prominently feature magnificent vistas across his later body of work, but one that emphasises the agricultural nature of the environment. People have, and continue, to support their lives from this land. The farmland visible on the screen initially looks fairly barren, until one realises that it appears to be recently ploughed and greenery is beginning to emerge. What at first appears to be a rather drab and sparse scene, a fact not aided by the film's muted colour palette, with this observation can be read as more optimistic and forward looking, containing hope for the crops to come in the following year.



Figure 3.1: Yu-bong and family begin their long walk in *Seopyeonje*

Reflecting the transition of the landscape from sparse to vibrant, Im creates the same change in his protagonists over the course of the scene. Across the duration of the shot the characters perform a version of Arirang, notably not the ‘Bonjo’ Arirang, but the Chindo Arirang, a version originating from the southern, less urban region of the peninsula, the same region from which *p’ansori* is believed to originate.⁴⁵ As the family members walk along the path, towards the camera, their song increases in tempo and orchestration, ending with the three characters smiling and dancing together.

The scene starts with Yu-bong singing alone, slowly, and with a particularly mournful tone, accentuated by the lyrics (‘A man can’t live for [a] hundred years, this is an unhappy world but let’s smile’).⁴⁶ If at this point Yu-bong sounds particularly far from smiling, Song-hwa, who sings the next verse, sounds utterly distraught. *P’ansori* as a vocal narrative form is noted for its emphasis on ‘rough timbres’ and a ‘harsh vocal quality’.⁴⁷ As they continue to sing, about being wandering *p’ansori* performers and about the sorrows in their

hearts, the tones adopted from *p'ansori* that they use sound almost as if they are singing its elegy. Song-hwa particularly adopts an almost funereal wail over a couple of lines. She then sings the refrain, with which Yu-bong, as is tradition, joins in.⁴⁸ Another string of mournful verses follows, this time lyrically focusing upon wild geese, all the time during which the tempo very slowly quickens. As Yu-bong and Song-hwa reach the second refrain, Dong-ho starts to accompany them on his drum and the tempo begins to increase far more rapidly. By this point in the scene the trio have advanced the majority of the way along the path towards the position of the camera, although would still be considered to be framed in a long shot.

By the time the characters reach the second refrain of Arirang the tone of the scene has fundamentally shifted. They have now stopped walking down the path and begin to become much more physically animated, moving laterally across the path and incorporating arm movements and some slight dancing into their performance. Lyrically the tone has changed also. Yu-bong implores Song-hwa through a verse to continue studying *p'ansori*, to which she responds that she will do *p'ansori* 'joyfully'. By the time the third refrain comes around, the characters have started dancing around in a circle and advanced further towards the camera. (Figure 3.2) The audience can now make out the details of Yu-bong's face, in particular his beaming grin. The verse sections continue to become shorter and shorter, with the refrain returning quicker and more vibrantly each time while the dancing likewise becomes more energetic until the performers exit the scene from the bottom right hand corner of the image.



Figure 3.2: The family enthusiastically sing Arirang, (from *Seopyeonje*)

What purpose does this shot serve in *Seopyeonje*? It has no significance in driving the narrative forward, nor does it particularly expand the audience's knowledge of the personalities of the film's characters. The shot emerges as a discrete unit in the film, not directly linked with any other, least of all the ones directly preceding or following it. The performance itself is perfectly enjoyable to watch, and the technical aspects of staging a five-minute continuous take are to be admired, yet the section could easily be considered superfluous. And while no reading of this scene readily presents itself, I choose to view its function as a microcosm of the film as a whole.

The three protagonists serve an allegorical purpose, if not to represent Korea as a whole, then at least an aspect of its national identity, one in which citizens are attuned to their cultural heritage. The film also straddles a temporal barrier, speaking to audiences in 1993 and beyond, yet set in an imprecise period after the Korean War which seems to flash back between the 1960s and

1950s. The family start in the distance, singing mournfully, before moving towards the audience, dancing, smiling and singing energetically. If we view this long and winding path as symbolising the progress of Korea and its history, the sorrowful section might represent two periods. To the contemporary audience the trials of recent history would have concerned the military government, particularly the repressive rule of Park Chung-hee, a period that is yet to come for the characters in the film. For them the recent past contains not only personal sorrows but the period of Japanese occupation and the Korean War. As noted previously, the idea of *han* has a tendency to extrapolate historical traumas into present sorrows, both personal and national, thus I would be hesitant to suggest that there is a division between the period of the military dictatorship and preceding horrors. The continuous build-up of sorrow as an element of *han* is a key theme of *Seopyeonje*, perhaps most pointedly articulated when, at a moment of climactic reunion, Song-hwa sings of a bird that accumulates grief by living for one thousand years.⁴⁹ The path that the characters walk down can be seen trailing behind them as far as the horizon. Viewed in this way the long and winding road seems to be an almost over-determined evocation of history. We first see these characters, who are historical to the audience of the film's release, after they have progressed a long way along their journey, and follow them as they move towards us, before almost stepping through the screen and into the auditorium to join us in the present.

My argument that that the path symbolises the progression of Korean history, and that the change in tone in song the characters sing demonstrates an optimism for the future is supported in the choice of landscape mentioned previously. The green shoots emerging through the newly ploughed soil bear

promise for the future, whilst suggesting that much work has already been done and that there will be more to follow. The significance of this message to a Korean audience in 1993, as the nation was undergoing the transition to democracy, is apparent. This scene suggests an enthusiastic optimism for the future.

The aspect of this section which most differentiates it from the remainder of the film, and therefore draws attention to itself, is the duration of the shot. A single, five-minute take could be considered long by almost any definition, especially considering the editing speed of the rest of the film, which while not at the frenetic levels of a mainstream action movie is certainly no slower than a great deal of films labelled as 'art-cinema'.⁵⁰ The shot is certainly atypical in length compared to the rest of the film, and thus begs the question: why shoot the scene in this way? If we consider the shot to be unified, as opposed to fragmented by editing, then we might view it as indicating the togetherness of the family before Dong-ho leaves. I prefer to think of the scene in terms of *continuity* however. By refusing to edit the scene, the act of motion is highlighted, as are the gradual transitions that take place in the song. It is worth noting at this point that there is no extended period of silence before Yu-bong starts to sing, and it is possible that the film shows the characters merely at the beginning of a new verse, rather than at the start of a song, thus allowing us to consider what had happened prior to the cut. Returning to my reading of the path as demonstrating a progression through Korean history, the lack of editing not only focuses attention on the arduous nature of the trip, that they find happiness only after progressing through sorrow, but also on the ceaseless nature of the song. The Korean people have progressed from the sorrows of the

past to the hopeful happiness of the future, and throughout this journey they have been accompanied by Arirang.

Given the history of the song detailed previously, the choice of Arirang in this section, as opposed to the extracts of *p'ansori* the family perform throughout the rest of the film, is significant. Arirang served not only as an anthemic form of resistance to the Japanese authorities, but also as a symbol of the persistence of Korean language and culture in the face of the Japanese endeavours to eradicate them. Arirang pre-dates the occupation, the war and the military dictatorships, with some versions allegedly dating back centuries. If the Korean people have been able to hold onto Arirang, and by extension their traditional Korean culture, throughout decades of trauma, the film seems to say that there is no reason to believe they will not continue to do so through the current period of political uncertainty and into a new democratic age.

The scene also provides an incredibly literal demonstration of the use of Arirang to purge *han*. *Seopyeonje* is as much about the essence of *han* as it is about *p'ansori*. Yu-bong is constantly reminding Song-hwa that the only way for her to become a truly great *p'ansori* soloist is to tap into her *han*, and for this reason he poisons her so that she will lose her sight. Yet at the end of the film, after Yu-bong has died and Dong-ho and Song-hwa are united again and perform together, Song-hwa has clearly become a talented singer, but still seems to suffer the burden of her *han*. Thus, while the film serves as a powerful piece of promotion for *p'ansori* as expressive of an idea of Korean national consciousness, it is Arirang that emerges as the more vibrant, and restorative musical form. Despite Songhwa's apparent mastery of the artform, *p'ansori* has not granted her a release from her sorrow. And while she and Dong-ho reunite at the close of the film to play together, the next morning they go their separate

ways. The *Arirang* scene, in contrast, shows the family using music to assuage their sorrows, before exiting the scene together. I have unfortunately seen no reports attesting to whether audiences in South Korea at the time of the film's release were driven to sing in this scene the way their forebears had while watching *Arirang*. By holding this shot, however, Im has invited his audience to be drawn into the transformation happening within his characters. As they move towards us, the camera ever so slowly zooms inwards, the tempo of the music increases and it becomes hard not to be caught up in the emotions of the family. In *Seopyeonje*, the structure of *Arirang* calls a collective audience into being, in order to accompany the refrain, audibly or otherwise. The status of the song as a repository of Korean history, what Atkins terms 'a national archive into which the historical experiences and emotions of the Korean people have been deposited'⁵¹, allows *Seopyeonje* to evoke a particular notion of Koreanness in its local audience.⁵²

Spirit's Homecoming* and the Site of *Han

Cho Jung-rae's 2016 film *Spirit's Homecoming* follows *Seopyeonje* in depicting *Arirang* in conjunction with traditional Korean cultural practices as being essential to the expression of feelings of *han*. *Arirang* is used at three key moments in *Spirit's Homecoming*, acting as a bridge between the young girl Jung-min's idealised home life and the trauma she experiences as a comfort woman during the Japanese occupation of Korea. I have discussed in this thesis' first chapter how the film vividly presents the traumas experienced by the comfort women, and I have argued that in doing so it has provided an avenue through which to engage with this topic in a way which may reduce its traumatic

impact. In the following section, I will show how Arirang and *han* play fundamental roles in this approach.

The first occurrence of Arirang in *Spirit's Homecoming* is when Jung-min, a Korean girl in her early teens, returning home from spending time with her friends, runs into her father walking through the fields. The scene starts with the father singing to himself, dancing as he ambles towards the camera. The version of Arirang he sings is different to both that used in *Seopyeonje* and the *Bonjo* Arirang, but contains the familiar refrain. Soon, Jung-min joins her father and climbs onto the wood carrier he is wearing on his back. They go onwards together, both continuing to sing Arirang. The final shot of this scene is a longer take in which the pair are framed against the landscape in a long-shot, as they walk along the path through the fields. The nod towards *Seopyeonje* in this section is clear, with the father and his daughter coming together affectionately through their singing of Arirang. The tempo is upbeat, echoing more closely the end of the section in Im's film than its beginning. Here, Arirang, the landscape, and the father's wood carrier (pointing to the family's rural existence), combine to create an image of a pre-colonial Korean lifestyle untouched by the political forces raging beyond their village.

This state of affairs is soon to change however with the arrival of the Japanese military into Jung-min's life. The next time we hear Arirang it is the *Bonjo* version, performed as a slow, plaintive piece of non-diegetic music with a piano and a single voice. Jung-min walks through similarly bucolic scenery as before, accompanied by the first appearance of the butterflies which will come to develop greater significance as the film progresses, the downbeat tone of the music seeming to ill-match the beauty and vibrancy of the scenery. The music fades out as Jung-min takes the final few steps towards her house, as she

realises that there are Japanese soldiers waiting for her there. The melancholic aspect of the music suddenly makes sense, as this is the last time the young girl will see her home and her family. The soldiers have come to take her away to be forced into sexual slavery, and ultimately, she will be killed before the liberation comes.

The theme of parting, which as we have seen is key to many versions of *Arirang*, is here combined with one of the most reprehensible acts of Japanese colonialism, creating a traumatic event that the film will demonstrate resonates for decades to come. As much as *Spirit's Homecoming* depicts the violence, depravity and brutality experienced by Jung-mi and the other young women over the course of their servitude, one of the film's strengths is the ways in which it attempts to portray harder-to-encapsulate aggressions, such as the loss of identity, homeland and culture inflicted upon these women as equally constitutive of their trauma. Forced to use their Japanese names, and speak in Japanese in all interactions, Jung-min begins to lose touch with her own identity, eventually forgetting her Korean name. Throughout the film characters clutch to *norigae*, an accessory that would attach to traditional Korean clothing, as good luck charms. These *norigae*, like *Arirang*, are individual cultural assets that provide links to the past and a sense of communal identity. The girls in this film have been kidnapped and forced into sexual slavery, relocated away from everyone they knew and have had their Korean names replaced and their use of the Korean language censured. In the face of such oppression, the *norigae* serve as a symbol of cultural resistance.

At the close of *Spirit's Homecoming* a shamanic ritual is performed to allow the spirits of the deceased comfort women to return home. The ritual itself is a cacophony of drumbeats and traditional instruments, accompanied by the

sounds of the shaman's dancing. The ritual falls silent at its completion, and into this silence returns the piano rendition of the *Bonjo Arirang*, now slower and more plaintive than before. We see a single butterfly, symbolising the spirit of Jung-min, flying across wide shots of the Korean landscape. As this lone butterfly is joined by many others, the piano and voice of the soundtrack are joined by a *haegeum* (a traditional stringed instrument), bells, and finally the crescendo of a larger orchestral swell. By editing between a shot of a butterfly entering Jung-min's courtyard and scenes of the girl returning home, the film suggests that although the ritual cannot undo the horrors of the events that befell these women, it can allow their spirits to return to their homeland.

In *Spirit's Homecoming*, the *Bonjo Arirang* is tied closely to Jung-min's forced removal from her hometown, and her eventual return, alongside images of yellow butterflies. This combination of Arirang with moments of great sorrow and melancholic release speaks to the twin nature of expressions of *han*. Through an articulation of the feeling of *han*, Arirang allows for a purging of this sentiment, or a lessening of its impact. The close association of Arirang with the yellow butterflies in the film is of particular note in this regard, given that the butterfly has come to be adopted as a symbol of the surviving comfort women. *Nabi* (the Korean word for a butterfly) is used as the icon for The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, the organisation which conducts the weekly protests in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul. The *nabi* was chosen as a symbol to represent the wish that victims of 'Japanese Military Sexual Slavery' would 'spread their wings free from discrimination, repression and violence'.⁵³ The butterfly has become iconographic of the movement to seek reparations from Japan for its wartime actions, both through online and offline campaigns, in particular around a

commemoration of the 1,000th weekly protest in December 2011.⁵⁴ *Spirit's Homecoming*, like the butterfly symbol, has become part of the movement that increases awareness of Japan's enforced sexual slavery of women from within its colonial empire. By tying this imagery together so concretely with Arirang, the film re-asserts the experience of the comfort women, and the wider colonial period as a whole, as constitutive of the generational accumulation of *han* that Arirang has come to express.

Introducing Arirang to the World

Over the past two decades both the North and South Korean governments have mobilised the name Arirang as a symbol of both national, and nationalist identity. Charting the full extent of these endeavours, the ways in which their politics support or contest other uses of the name and in what way these projects have added layers of signification and meaning to the word Arirang would require a separate chapter to fully do the topic justice. Instead I hope to briefly detail a few of the key uses of Arirang in recent years in order to demonstrate how both the name and the song have been tied to a sense of Korean national identity, an aspect that the two films discussed in the remainder of this chapter engage with.

Arirang is the name chosen by the Korea International Broadcast Foundation for their international multimedia network which broadcasts TV and radio globally through local transmission platforms as well as online. While the organisation is non-governmental, the corporation's website demonstrates a number of ties with the South Korean government, in particular the Ministry for Culture, Sports and Tourism. The network's motto is 'Korea for the World, the World for Korea', and a statement on the corporation's website from the CEO

states that the TV station was founded to 'introduce a true picture of Korea to the world'.⁵⁵ Given the corporation's ties to the South Korean Government and its interest in increasing tourist revenues, this 'true picture' of Korea is clearly motivated more by promotion than journalistic integrity.

There have also been more official moves to both brand Arirang as a South Korean product, as well as a uniquely Korean song. On June 23rd 2011 the South Korean minister for Culture, Sports and Tourism announced that the government was compiling a list of all the variations of Arirang, including those from North Korea, as part of a submission to UNESCO to declare the song as part of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity.⁵⁶ This announcement is seen as a response to a move by China to designate Arirang as part of its own cultural heritage due to the fact that it is sung by ethnic Koreans within the country.⁵⁷ As a result of the death of Kim Jong-il towards the end of 2011, talks between the North and South Korean governments on the proposal ceased, leading the Republic of Korea to submit a solo application in June 2012. The process of declaring Arirang an intangible cultural asset then not only became a movement which asserted the importance to the Korean people of the song, but one which will end up declaring that Arirang belongs not to the Chinese, nor even to Koreans as a whole, but solely to those in South Korea as a feature of their 'unique' cultural heritage.

While the South Korean government was pursuing this approach to Arirang, a separate campaign was at work attempting to highlight the song's Korean heritage to the residents of New York and London. Throughout the course of August 2011, a 30-second advert ran 1,500 times upon a giant screen in Times Square.⁵⁸ The same advert was played on the digital billboards of Piccadilly Circus, fifty times a day throughout November.⁵⁹ The short film

shows a vinyl record playing, while the audio contains an electric guitar version of the *Bonjo Arirang* and a voiceover which asks:

Do you hear?

It's not just melody. It's Memory.

It's not just sound. It's Sensation.

It's not just harmony. It's History.

It's not just a song. It's Soul.

It is the genuine music of Korea.

Arirang

The proposition made by the voiceover is that Arirang, 'the genuine music of Korea', is more than merely a collection of musical elements. Instead the song is a repository for both emotions and historical memories, with neither at the expense of the other. The 'soul' and 'sensation' of the music raises it beyond being merely a historical relic or museum piece that holds meaning only for those trying to conserve the past, while the 'memory' and 'history' contained within the idea of Arirang situates the piece as far more than just a catchy tune.

The campaign was spearheaded by Professor Seo Kyoung-duk, who claimed that he was inspired by the surge in popularity of Korean pop music internationally, and wanted to demonstrate how many of K-pop's characteristics stemmed from Arirang.⁶⁰ Professor Seo is part of a political activist group, For The Next Generation, whose previous projects have raised awareness of the South Korean government's stance on the comfort women issue and the Dokdo Island dispute.⁶¹ Intriguingly, the group also use the slogan 'Korea for the World, the World for Korea' as the title for their website.⁶² Arirang is thus

mobilised, both through official channels and non-governmental organisations as symbolic of a South Korean national identity.

Both the Korean government and For the Next Generation campaigned in 2011 to bring Arirang to the attention of the world beyond Korea. The petition to UNESCO and the advertisement which played in New York and London grappled with what it is that makes Arirang so significant to Korean identity, and in doing so reinforced that connection, as well as establishing it to those who may never have heard of Arirang before. The attempt to irrevocably link Arirang with the South Korean state, especially from the viewpoint of the United States, will become particularly significant in the following section.

It is not simply in the public arena that Arirang is mobilised as a display of national strength. The song, which first spread across the peninsula, and was then broadcast across the globe, was finally propelled into space. Arirang is the name given to series of multipurpose imaging satellites produced by South Korea. The latest of these, the Arirang-3, launched in May 2012, contains a high resolution optical device that can detect items less than a metre in diameter from an altitude of 700 kilometres.⁶³ While the device is not solely for government use nor to monitor any one particular country, analysts point to the ability of the satellite to provide surveillance on North Korea in much greater detail than previously possible, both for national security purposes and intelligence gathering, as well as reducing South Korea's reliance upon the United States for such intelligence.⁶⁴ Above and beyond the symbolic value of the launching of a satellite named Arirang, the launch positioned South Korea as both a leading military and technological power, as only the fifth nation to possess a 'sub-metre' Earth observing satellite.⁶⁵

North Korea has likewise been involved in the mobilisation of Arirang for nationalist ends. The Arirang mass games are an annual event held between August and October since 2002 featuring 80,000 performers each night and two million audience members over the course of its run. The performance is a dramatised version of the official national narrative from the colonial era to the present day and into an imagined future.⁶⁶ As the reclusive nation's greatest tourist attraction, the Games hold a particularly significant role in broadcasting the Korean Worker's Party's message to foreign nationals. By not only naming these performances Arirang, but through the inclusion of the song in the show and the theme of two lovers being separated, which runs throughout the performance, the Mass Games entwine Arirang with the state-sanctioned history of the DPRK (Figure 3.3).



Figure 3.3: The Arirang Mass Games⁶⁷

Like the South Korean Government with its Arirang satellites, the North Korean leadership has drawn upon Arirang in their own technological endeavours. Arirang was the name of the tablet computer allegedly developed within North Korea to contribute ‘to the country’s science technology distribution, culture, and education projects’.⁶⁸ Likewise, Red Star, the operating system used by computers in North Korea features start-up and shut-down sounds believed to be based upon Arirang.⁶⁹ Clearly the differences between the North and South Korean governments’ promotion of Arirang and use of the name in their respective technology industries are significant: however, I suggest that they are differences in degree more than in kind. Both nations have developed ways with which to present their version of the national narrative and what it means to be Korean, and have named the bearer of this message Arirang, just as both have chosen to reference Arirang in their latest technological achievements. What this demonstrates is the pride of place in which Arirang resides in Korean culture, across both sides of the DMZ. Arirang is deeply entwined with a sense of what it means to be Korean, as well as with a pride in what the nation produces. It is perhaps no surprise then that in 2000 and 2004, when the two Korean states came together to field a unified Korean Olympic team, Arirang was chosen as their anthem.⁷⁰

***Imoogi* on the World Market**

In a cinematic context, the association of Arirang with nationalism, national pride and technological development is most powerfully illustrated in the use of the song in Shim Hyng-rae’s film *D-War* (2008). *D-War* (released as *Dragon Wars* in the United Kingdom and perplexingly *Dragon Wars: D-War* in the United States) is a conscious and deliberate attempt by the director to create a

South Korean film which would appeal to audiences in the United States.⁷¹

Written, produced and directed by Shim, a former screen comedian widely recognised in his home country, the film defies a simple categorisation of its nationality. The film's Korean production companies, Showbox Entertainment and Shim's Younggu-Art Movies, ensure that industry listings characterise the film as a South Korean production, yet the vast majority of the film was shot in Los Angeles, featuring English dialogue and a predominately American cast. These latter aspects resulted in the film becoming ineligible for any form of government funding or subsidy, and therefore its producers had to raise its \$30 million budget from business interests.⁷²

In considering Shim's attempt to produce a globally successful film, it is worth briefly examining the way in which debates over globalisation have been expressed within the Korean context. The official approach to globalisation emerging from the Republic of Korea, especially in relation to the cultural industries, manages to be simultaneously outward and inward looking. This strategy emerges from the *segzehwa* (globalisation) campaign launched in 1994 by the then President Kim Young-sam, which sought to encourage Korea's advancement in a globalising world.⁷³ Agreements made in 1993 as part of the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs established increased competition within the Korean market. In response, the *segzehwa* doctrine endeavoured not only to force Korean corporations to adopt international business models in order to increase their competitiveness globally, and as a result domestically, but also to place an emphasis on 'Koreanness'.

'Globalization must be underpinned by Koreanization' declared President Kim. 'Koreans should march out into the world on the strength of their unique culture and traditional values'.⁷⁴ Thus a globalised model of Korean cinema combines

international institutional influences and aesthetic styles with a knowledge of, and foundation in, Korean culture.

The international sources from which *D-War* draws its inspiration are not hard to reveal. Broadly, the film could be described as embodying all of the defining traits of the Hollywood special effects film, a fact accentuated by Shim's choice of Los Angeles as a location and American-English as the principal language. Scenes of the widespread destruction of the city, as well as those depicting the armed forces in conflict with an array of computer-generated foes particularly call to mind *Godzilla* (Roland Emmerich, 1998), as well as the much-wider genre of the disaster movie. This influence is perhaps best considered as a conceptual approach however, rather than as a more typical generic, iconic or thematic similarity. Shim's style is emblematic of the most derogatory aspects of the adjective Hollywood, namely a subordination of narrative development, characterisation and dialogue to dramatic, computer-designed visual spectacles.

But what of *D-Wars*' Korean characteristics? The plot revolves around two competing *Imoogi*, giant Korean sea-serpents with the ability to turn into celestial dragons once they have acquired the *Yeouijoo*, a magical pearl granted from Heaven. Five-hundred years ago, the *Yeouijoo* was placed inside a young girl in Korea, and a warrior was sent from Heaven to protect her. The 'evil' *Imoogi* Buraki send his army to destroy the girl's village, but she and her protector kill themselves before the serpent can obtain the *Yeouijoo*. In present day Los Angeles, the reincarnations of the girl (Sarah) and the warrior (Ethan) are again confronted by Buraki. The remainder of the film consists primarily of visual-effects set pieces which feature the couple attempting to evade the *Imoogi* whilst it, and later its army, devastate Los Angeles.

The position of Korean culture within *D-War* is oddly transient, seeming to be both fundamental to the origins and progression of the narrative as well as simultaneously insignificant. As detailed above, the *Imoogi* and the *Yeouijoo*, features drawn from Korean mythology, and declared as such within the film, serve as justification for the narrative. The historical section, taking place in Korea, is presented as an extended flashback and features Korean dialogue overlaid with English subtitles.⁷⁵ This sequence presents an evocation of traditional Korean culture replete with archetypal artefacts, representing varied costumes, from peasant outfits, through the signifiers of the *yangban* class to elegant *hanbok*, architecture from huts to palaces, and a demonstration of the Korean language. Yet within the diegesis of the film this serves not as a way to introduce Korean culture to those unaccustomed to it, but as a way of adding layers of distinguishing exoticised backstory to an otherwise unremarkable film. The *Imoogi* and *Yeouijoo* are introduced in a single expository speech that could easily lose an audience unfamiliar with the terminology, and no sooner than the Korean village appears on-screen is it set upon by Buraki's army. In short, within the context of the film I suggest Korean culture is invoked to add a further layer of visual spectacle, rather than spectacle being the vehicle through which the filmmaker attempts to transmit Korean culture. The inclusion of Arirang in the film's score likewise may be read as echoing the message of the advertisement discussed previously, establishing Arirang as Korean due to its appearance in this Korean film, but I would argue that its function is reversed. The use of Arirang by the film brands *D-War* as genuinely Korean, a factor the director relied upon in order to achieve domestic success.

Any attempt to position *D-War* as 'authentically Korean' or simply an 'imitation' of Hollywood relies upon a reductivist notions of what a film emerging

from a given national cinema 'should' look like. Perhaps the most that can be stressed in this respect is the extent to which a given 'culture', using the word in a loose, anthropological sense, is foregrounded by a particular film. Thus, in the context of Korea we might envisage a spectrum, with films such as *Seopyeonje* and Im's later works *Chunhyang* (2000) and *Chihwaseon* (2002), texts which directly address traditional Korean cultural practices and the concept of 'Koreanness', towards one extreme, with *D-War* positioned towards the other end, with perhaps the entire gamut of Korean cinema positioned at various locations between the two. It may be instructive in looking at the Korean elements within *D-War* not as indicative of an underlying cultural sensibility, but comparable to the way, for example, a film such as *The Mummy* (Stephen Sommers, 1999) and its ensuing sequels draw upon Egyptian (and later Chinese) mythology in an attempt to produce engaging narratives around which the production team may construct a film rooted in the spectacles of visual effects.

Looking at the extent to which a Korean film targeted towards an international market engages with its national culture is an approach suggested by the idea of *seggyehwa*, yet would be of limited relevance to an analysis of *D-War* were it not for the attempts made by the director to emphasise the nationality of the film within certain contexts.⁷⁶ Despite what might be considered the film's tangential relationship to the concept of 'Koreanness', the domestic success of *D-War*, as well as its reception amongst Korean-American communities in the United States, is widely attributed to the ways in which it enlisted a sense of Korean patriotism.⁷⁷ To this end, the film's use of Arirang is particularly emblematic.

D-Wars ends with Sarah, the girl who contains the *Yeouijoo* inside her,

sacrificing herself in order that 'The Good *Imoogi*' may become a dragon and defeat Buraki. As Sarah's ghost says her goodbyes to Ethan, the dragon is seen to shed a tear before flying off into the sky. It is at this moment that Arirang begins on the soundtrack, continuing over the closing credits. The song then, at its most literal sense, is included to convey the sorrow of two lovers parting. The version of the film which appeared in Korean cinemas places a message from the director ahead of the final credits, stating that "*D-War* and I will succeed on the world market without fail', followed by a sequence of photographs of Shim at work on set, ending with a shot of him standing in front of the Hollywood sign (Figure 3.4).⁷⁸



Figure 3.4: Shim Hyung-rae in front of the Hollywood sign.⁷⁹

Before discussing the director's closing statement, I wish to consider the arrangement of the Arirang used within *D-War*. The orchestration was arranged by Steve Jablonsky, whose credits include frequent collaborations with director

Michael Bay and composer Hans Zimmer, and performed by the 150-piece Seattle Orchestra. The song begins quietly and at a relatively slow tempo in comparison to much of the bombastic pieces which had filled the soundtrack up to this point, but quickly becomes increasingly layered. The piece begins with a string arrangement, swiftly joined by a piano which functions to keep the rhythm for the majority of the song, which is then accompanied by wind instruments which alongside the strings perform the melody of the *Bonjo Arirang*. After an instrumental chorus, the choir, apparently ninety people strong⁸⁰, sing a repetition of the chorus, backed up by percussion. The orchestra swells at the close of the second chorus and the percussion is emphasised, sounding almost militaristic. The use of a choir to lend gravitas to a particular scene is a particular trope of the Hollywood action movie genre, a tendency particularly noticeable within scores produced by Hans Zimmer, a stalwart of the genre. In this way, the orchestration serves as emblematic of the film as a whole, interpreting traditional Korean material, in this case Arirang, within American generic conventions.

The combination of this bombastic, domineering version of Arirang with photographs of Shim in front of the Hollywood sign and the director's signed statement of intent serves to direct a specific message to the film's Korean audience. In the previous section I detailed the ways in which Arirang has been mobilised as a signifier of Korean identity. By placing the song over his statement that he will 'succeed on the world market', Shim attempts to pose the struggle of his film amid international competition as a reflection of the place of the Korean nation in the wider currents of global politics and business. The importance of the Korean elements in *D-War's* narrative thus become heightened retroactively. The combination of Arirang, Shim's statement, and the

film itself creates a situation in which the success of *D-War* internationally is presented not solely as a triumph of one film, or of one director, but of an entire nation and its culture, thus invoking the nation's support.

This message was heavily promoted by Shim at the time of the film's release. The Region 2 DVD release of *D-War* (Produced by Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, entitled *Dragon Wars*) contains a special feature, '5000 years in the making', which includes a number of press conferences and events in which Shim discusses his film. In many of these events, which are conducted in front of Korean audiences, Shim goes to great lengths to accentuate the Korean nature of the film. He stresses that the *Imoogi* are 'unique to Korean folklore' and recounts a story that he cried during filming at a moment when an American character delivered his line that his tale was based upon a Korean legend.⁸¹ In recounting this story of being overwhelmed by his feelings, not of personal satisfaction, but of national pride, he suggests that his Korean audience should join him in experiencing the rapture of this moment. The director steps far beyond a simple assertion that the film is transmitting images of Korean culture to the world, and therefore should be supported by the Korean public; he goes so far as to suggest that the film will enhance the international image of Koreans. Shim claims Koreans are depicted as 'ugly or greedy characters' by Hollywood studios, or 'related to illegal affairs', and in doing so establishes his film as combating this tendency in an attempt to garner a wave of nationalist support.⁸²

Shim's positioning of *D-War* as a film which confronts American cinema on its own terms is made most explicit in the ways in which he emphasises the provenance of the digital effects. Despite the majority of the production of the film taking place in the United States, all of *D-War*'s visual effects were created

by Shim's company Younggu Art in South Korea. The director has even suggested that the title *D-War* can stand for 'Digital War', a fight between the Hollywood production system and his own Korean effects studio.⁸³

It is in the final moments of *D-War*, from the flight of the dragon, through Shim's message and up to the photo of the director in front of the Hollywood sign, over all of which Arirang plays, that the director's agenda crystallises. By accompanying his statement that the film will 'succeed on the world market without fail' with a song that functions as a quasi-national anthem, arranged in a particularly militaristic style, Shim constructs *D-War* for his Korean audience as not simply another piece of cinema, but as a signal that Korea intends to perform upon a global stage.

Arirang's intersection with the notion of *han* invokes a long history of Korea being at the mercy of external states. As discussed previously, as well as a means with which to address the suffering of the colonial period, Arirang's continued use in the modern era has seen the song internalise later tragedies, particularly the Korean War which saw the peninsula become the battlefield for a period of intense heat in a Cold War conducted between foreign superpowers, and then a military dictatorship supported by American forces in an attempt to arrest the spread of Communism. Shim taps into this sentiment of a nation being overlooked and stereotyped through his use of Arirang, recalling this troubled period of history. By asking the audiences to engage with their feeling of *han*, which as I have shown contains the idea of redemption from the feeling through its expression, and by positioning *D-war* as an expression of the *han* of an overlooked nation, Shim's directorial statement can be read as expressing the belief that his success will purge a nation of its *han*.

It is certainly an ingenious marketing strategy, and to an extent Shim appears to have struck a nerve with his audience. Critics of the film within South Korea faced a virulent reaction. Chin Jung-kwon, a film critic who spoke out against the film on national television, soon received threats and found his marriage to a Japanese woman discussed online with dark overtones and his children referred to as 'Japs'.⁸⁴ He believes that Shim's nationalist message, a message I suggest is embodied by his use of Arirang alongside his closing statement, is the only motivation for his audience's positive response. "Without this Korean-goes-to-Hollywood theme, no one would have watched it," he claims. "That was Shim's strategy. He never talks about the aesthetics of his movie. Only patriotism."⁸⁵ By ending *D-War* with Arirang, Shim recalls the nationalist fervour that surrounded Nah Un-gyu's 1926 film during the colonial era. The song, which has become as symbolic of the nation as its national anthem, serves as a rallying cry, urging the people to support Shim and his films as he attempts global domination.

It is perhaps ironic that the 1926 film *Arirang* ends with the protagonist being taken away towards jail. In January 2013 Shim was sentenced to 10 months in prison with a two-year probation and 80 hours of social service resulting from his failure to pay employees wages totaling 891.5 million won (\$770,190).⁸⁶ Younggu Art has been auctioned off, and charges that the director threatened his investors and embezzled company funds are outstanding.⁸⁷ Speaking to the press following the verdict, Shim said "I'm sorry for causing such trouble. I worked hard to export our films... but it was difficult."⁸⁸

A Song of Sorrow (Reprise)

At first glance, it might be hard to envision a film more unlike *D-War* than Kim Ki-duk's *Arirang* (2011). In contrast to Shim Hyung-rae's record-breaking budget, extensive visual effects and international production, Kim's film is an exercise in cinematic minimalism. The film was shot on a single digital camera with Kim serving as writer, director, editor, producer, cameraman and cast. In place of closing credits, the film ends simply with a shot of a sheet of paper with Kim's name rendered in Korean and its roman transliteration, leading one reviewer to describe the film as 'the ultimate "film d'auteur"'.⁸⁹ Yet despite their differences, both *D-War* and *Arirang* (2011) raise questions about Korean cinema's place in the wider world market and draw upon the associations of the song *Arirang* in order to enhance their messages.

Arirang (2011) exists on the boundary between documentary and fiction, showing the audience Kim's confrontation with himself, invoking concepts of autobiography, psychoanalysis and the confessional. In the twelve years between 1996 and 2008 Kim Ki-duk directed fifteen films and became one of the most widely recognized *auteurs* working in the South Korean film industry. *Arirang* (2011), filmed three years after his last film, finds the director in a state of creative paralysis. Over the course of the film, revealed slowly through interviews seemingly drunkenly conducted with himself, Kim reveals the reasons for his withdrawal from the film industry, as well as society in general. Kim is living inside a tent in a frozen cabin in what initially appears to be a remote mountainous region, but that later shots show may be closer to civilisation than previously believed. Much of the film features scenes of the director going about his day-to-day life, cooking, eating, and fiddling with his homemade espresso machine. As night comes and the director begins to drink,

he speaks directly to the camera about his circumstances.

From the multiple versions of Kim Ki-duk that appear on screen emerges a figure who seems to be the living embodiment of *han*. In the first of a number of extended interview scenes, Kim Ki-duk interrogates himself over his reasons for turning his back on filmmaking. Wearing two different outfits and his hair in different styles, the sequence is shot to give the impression that there are two Kim Ki-duks in discussion in the cabin. One, whose tone is moderately aggressive and his questions accusative, demands answers from the other, a sobbing and seemingly broken man. It is through the interrogatory Kim that we first piece together what it is that has caused the director to be, in his own words, so 'shocked' and 'traumatised'. During the shooting of Kim's previous film, *Dream* (2008), there was an accident whilst filming a scene in which a character hangs herself and the actress was nearly hanged. Kim rushed in and managed to cut her down, saving her life, but the incident had had a profound effect upon the director, making him unable to work for fear that doing so may bring harm to others. 'If someone died because of the images and stories I created, how terrible it would be', he declares to himself.⁹⁰ It appears that it is particularly the idea of depicting violence and death which is currently troubling Kim.

The accident during the filming of *Dream* is but one of three concerns that Kim addresses in this first discussion, all of which seem to be feeding upon each other within his mind, shattering his feelings of confidence and his ability to write. Kim's discussion of his sadness is indicative of the way in which *han* speaks to an accumulation of sorrow, with each of his concerns seemingly feeding upon each other. Kim talks about the pressure he feels to create a film which can win a Grand Prix at a major international festival, or create an

international blockbuster success, feats which have as yet evaded the Korean film industry despite its significant rise in prominence on the global arena over the past 15 years. Kim is no stranger to festival success, having picked up prizes for directing in Berlin (Silver Bear, 2004) and Venice (Silver Lion, 2004), as well as a host of awards from smaller festivals, but thus far a Grand Prix had eluded him.

The director's statement that he feels a desire to have a box-office success is, however, surprising. Kim's films are known internationally as festival, rather than multiplex, favourites, and his position in his domestic industry is vehemently that of the outsider. This was perhaps no better demonstrated than during a television debate held in 2006 in which Kim asserted that the success of Bong Joon-ho's *The Host* (2006) was down to patriotism/nationalism and the screen dominance of local distributors who controlled the multiplexes.⁹¹ One can only wonder as to what Kim would make of *D-War* and the debate that accompanied its promotional campaign. Kim's desire for commercial success makes a little more sense once he begins to discuss the departure of two of his collaborators at around the time of the making of *Dream*. Juhn Jai-hon (director of *Beautiful*, 2008) and Jang Hun (director of *Rough Cut*, 2008) had worked as Kim's assistants previously and subsequently produced their directorial features from a story and a screenplay (respectively) by Kim Ki-duk. Following their success with these films both left him to pursue their careers with the larger studios and work with greater budgets and bigger stars. Kim has taken this turn of events as a personal slight, repeatedly using the word betrayal and describing Juhn and Jang as like family members. (Kim does not mention either person by name but refers to the titles

of their films in a way as to remove all possible ambiguity as to whom he is discussing.)

Having detailed the three factors blocking his creative progress - the accident during the filming of *Dream*, the pressures he feels to succeed internationally and the desertion of his colleagues - Kim sings Arirang for the first of three times in the film. Appropriately it is the sorrowful Kim who sings, holding his bottle of drink like a microphone and with a strong, emotional and reverberating tone in his voice. The version of Arirang he sings is not the Bonjo Arirang, and the lyrics are translated as follows:

‘This lamentable world/ my cold dear/you leave your sentiments/
with me behind/ so, I can’t help but cry/ Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo/
Over the Arirang hills/ send me please’.

While lyrically the song follows the tradition of Arirang being used to discuss the separation of lovers, and thus relates most closely to the feelings Kim holds to his departed assistants, the visual elements of the film engage with his other doubts. The singing sequence begins with a shot of Kim, before cutting to a room that has been described as like a shrine to Kim Ki-duk’s filmmaking career, with the director’s singing overlaid on the soundtrack.⁹² The camera pans from left to right along a wall chronologically displaying posters of all of Kim’s films, from *Crocodile* (1996) to *Dream*. Yet the poster for the film preceding *Dream*, *Breath* (2007), is missing, creating some space between *Dream* and the other films, visually separating it. (Figure 3.5) A few shots later, the camera repeats a similar motion across some paintings produced by the director, and as the song finishes, pans in the opposite direction across a shelf

containing what are clearly festival prizes. The singing of Arirang is used as a way of confronting sorrow, and in this sequence sound and vision combine to evoke the three issues Kim Ki-duk is struggling to address.



Figure 3.5: Kim's film *Dream* is visually isolated. (from *Arirang*)

Whilst in this reflexive mode, Kim discusses what he thinks Arirang means. He claims to have heard that it means 'self-realisation' in Chinese characters, and that to him the Arirang hills are the hills of life, going up and down. As he begins to sing again, repeating 'upwards' and 'downwards', he begins to weep. The shot then cuts to an image of Kim, a third Kim this time, wearing a different shirt and again with his hair styled slightly differently, watching footage of himself singing, presumably in the cold sobriety of the morning after. The shot recalls a sequence in *Breath* in which the prison warden who has been watching the primary couple's burgeoning relationship over CCTV is revealed to be the film's director, Kim Ki-duk.

The awareness of the camera, and the act of filmmaking as a whole is played with throughout *Arirang* (2011).⁹³ In an earlier direct address to the

camera, Kim claimed that he could no longer make films and was therefore filming himself, that he needed to film something in order to be happy, but he didn't yet know what. As the film progresses, the act of filmmaking itself becomes more prominent and the transition between Kim expressing himself verbally and through the medium of film is enacted. The camera remains static throughout much of *Arirang* (2011), yet as the film progresses, there is a subtle change in cinematic style in regard to Kim's use of cinematography and lighting techniques. Increasingly, the ad-hoc composition of much of the earlier sections of the film is replaced with more carefully composed cinematography.

Particularly striking are images of his cracked heels as he stands upon his porch (which became the image used in the film's promotional material) and a sequence in which he eats a large smoked fish, with head attached, gazing into the creature's eyes like Hamlet reminiscing over poor Yorick. These shots differentiate themselves from much of the rest of the film due to their higher levels of contrast, as well as a reduced presence of digital image noise. However, this change in the style of the film's image is typified most dramatically in the sequence directly preceding Kim's second rendition of *Arirang*.

The section in question follows a sequence depicting Kim Ki-duk watching a segment of one of his previous films, *Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter... and Spring* (2003) in which a monk, played by Kim, atones for his sins as a child. The director weeps while watching the film, but judging by the stylistic changes discussed above which follow this scene, it is not the film's Buddhist message of redemption that reaches the director, but the way in which it constructs this message via cinematic techniques. The image on screen cuts from Kim's sobbing face to the director in silhouette, working in front of a

window. The shift in lighting from what had thus far been a relatively evenly lit film to a sequence bathed in shadows and contrasts is dramatic, as is the change of pace in editing. The next 77 seconds feature 23 shots, a significant acceleration during a film in which thus far shots in excess of 20 seconds were common. What most fundamentally marks Kim's transition from the literal to the cinematic, from telling the audience what he is thinking and feeling to showing them on screen, are his ensuing actions. Throughout the film Kim has demonstrated a certain mechanical prowess. He discusses having worked in factories earlier in his life and is frequently depicted maintaining the steampunk-esque espresso machine he has constructed himself. Therefore, when the camera cuts to Kim doing some metalwork there is nothing particularly unusual, until the audience realises that he is, with great precision and artistry, building a revolver.

Once the revolver is built, the scene changes to the view through a car windscreen, driving along snowy roads at night. Kim is revealed as the driver, it is the first time in the film that he has strayed far from the cabin, and he begins to sing. The song is the same as before, but delivered this time in loud screeches, full of anger. Before the song has finished Kim has degraded into simply screaming full-force towards the camera. If Kim's first song was demonstrative of feelings of *chônghan*, this rendition conveys the full explosive force of *wônhan*. In between shots of Kim and the view from the car is a section in which the poster images from his films replace the filmic image. Rather than posters filmed by his camera as in the previous version of the song, these images replace the image track: digital images inserted into the film during the editing process. In discussing the ways in which Arirang is able to express a person's sorrow, I have emphasised the way in which emotional events

accumulate and conflate within the singer's performance. *Arirang* draws upon a history of distress in order to confront the performer's current situation. The audience has by this point probably divined Kim's intentions, that he plans to murder those he felt had betrayed him, but the image track once again emphasises that, for Kim, sorrows come not as single spies, but in battalions. The poster artwork depicted for his previous films includes not only the Korean versions but Chinese, American and a selection of European releases. We are reminded of Kim's international success, as well as his regrets over what he has not yet achieved, but the posters also foreground progression and accumulation. Kim's distress is the result not of a single event, but of a lifetime.

Kim's 'singing' ends with him chastising himself and then repeating his first words in the film, 'Ready? Action!'. *Arirang* (2011) has now fully entered into the realm of the dramatic and the cinematic, away from the worlds of documentary and dialogue. Kim exclaims that he will kill 'those sons of bitches', but the audience doesn't see him do so. We watch Kim drive to three separate locations (one for each of the two directors and the producer he had mentioned earlier). During the first two killings, a gunshot on the soundtrack is placed over external shots of buildings, and during the third we see a close-up of the revolver's hammer coming down and then hear the shot. Kim has spent the majority of *Arirang* (2011) telling the audience what is happening within his emotional state and within the film itself, either by direct address or self-interrogation. In this sequence, through the use of montage and sound design in its most simplistic form, Kim asks the audience to construct the actions of these killings in their own minds. The same is true of Kim's exit from his film. The image cuts between Kim staring straight into the camera, then to the revolver pointed directly down the lens. Once more he shouts 'Ready? Action!'.

We see his hand pull a string, which is revealed to be tied around the trigger of the revolver, before the film cuts to an exterior shot, a sudden bang, and the sound of something slumping to the floor.

Kim Ki-duk's suicide was a fiction, as was his murderous rampage. The final sequence of the film shows Kim driving along the same snowy roads we saw previously, with another person, the first besides Kim seen in the entire film, walking along the side of the road. As he drives, Kim sings *Arirang*. The emotional tone of this song lies somewhere between those of the previous two: it is still sorrowful yet doesn't collapse into tears, forceful without becoming aggressive. Images of the road give way to another pan across Kim's paintings in the cabin, as seen during the first song, before ending in a slideshow of images of the director. The similarities between *Arirang* (2011) and *D-War* at this moment are evident. Both films end with images of their director at work on set, with *Arirang* on the soundtrack following an explicitly stated intent by the directors to succeed internationally, albeit within different critical arenas: Shim seeks an international blockbuster, Kim longs for the grand prix from a renowned festival.⁹⁴ Both Kim and Shim position *Arirang* as simultaneously outward and inward looking, fixated upon the past but expressing hope for the future. It is from history, be it national folklore or personal trauma that these filmmakers draw their inspiration, and accompanied by *Arirang* they set their sights upon the horizon of the global market.

Kim Ki-duk's *Arirang* (2011) serves as a graphic example of how *Arirang* allows the performer to purge themselves of *han*. The end of Kim's film has him repeat his *Arirang* for a third time, and once the image track has disappeared into the slideshow of images of the director, the song changes. After a brief pause, Kim sings the Bonjo *Arirang*. His voice is soft, soulful and melodic. The

sensation is one of catharsis. For Kim Ki-duk, *Arirang*, both the song and his film of the same name, is a process. Through *Arirang* he has been able to address the traumas of his past. His fears over representing death on film, and sadness over the betrayal of his colleagues had previously prevented him from being able to make a film. Through *Arirang* (2011), he has been able to address these fears, confront his former collaborators, and stage a cinematic death: his own. In doing so, Kim frees himself of the *han* that was blocking his ability to make films, and produces a final sequence that demonstrates a grasp of non-literal cinematic imagery, returning him to the arena of his earlier fiction films. The sight of another person during Kim's drive in *Arirang* (2011)'s final section is indicative of the director's return to the world in general. All that remains is the Grand Prix at an international festival.

Encore: Over the Arirang Hills, To Venice

This chapter has looked at the ways in which *Arirang* has been used in three contemporary Korean films, with reference to the multiple meanings established within the song previously, both from within and without the cinematic world.

Spirit's Homecoming utilises *Arirang* as a way of expressing the sorrow associated with the colonial period of Korean history, invoking the song's previous cinematic incarnations and associating it with both the traumatic and redemptive aspects of *han*. *D-War* and *Arirang* (2011) display fundamentally different approaches to the art of cinema and yet share a number of similar concerns, exemplified by their evocation of the multiple meanings of *Arirang*. Although not directly engaging with the colonial period, these films depict the way in which *han* has been accumulated across generations of Korean culture, and the extent to which historical traumas echo into the present. For both

filmmakers, Arirang becomes an outlet through which to express and engage with personal and national sentiments of *han*.

Through the events detailed above, and many more besides, Arirang has become a signifier for the Korean people. The song presents an almost limitless possibility to articulate any number of woes, a situation allowing it to be succinctly described by McCalmont as ‘a song for all miseries and all occasions’.⁹⁵ It is a channel for the Korean people to articulate what has been described as a uniquely Korean sentiment, that of *han*, perfectly suited to express both national and personal traumas, and in doing so conflate the two. Koreans have suffered individually through the torment of their history, and the suffering of individual Koreans collectively has scarred the nation.

But the power of *han*, and of Arirang, is in their redemptive and cathartic abilities, demonstrated most clearly in Kim Ki-duk’s film. The healing power of *han* is a parallel to the therapeutic approach to trauma I have explored in chapter one and will return to in this thesis’ final chapter. After *Arirang* (2011), Kim directed *Amen* (2011). Like the earlier film, *Amen* was produced with a minimal crew consisting solely of Kim Ki-duk; however he does focus upon an actress and a fictional scenario in the place of himself. His grand return to more conventional filmmaking came in 2012 with *Pietà*. On the 8th September 2012, in the packed Sala Grande of the Palazzo del Cinema in Venice, Kim Ki-duk was awarded the Golden Lion, the Grand Prix of the city’s film festival, for *Pietà*. When the moment came to give an acceptance speech, Kim took to the stage and waited for the applause to die down. Clutching the statuette to his chest, he paused, looked into the audience, and began to sing,

‘*Arirang, Arirang, Arariyo...*’⁹⁶

Chapter Four

The Haunted Screen

A Spectral Turn

The Jeong Brothers' film *Epitaph* opens in silence. The screen flickers to life and presents a black and white, 4:3 ratio sequence of a medical operation, shown in stark, graphic, anatomical detail. The image is riddled with scratches and blemishes, indexically highlighting the passage of time between the recording of the act and its later transmission, which we, as the audience, find ourselves watching. As the footage reaches its end, the filmic image diverges from the celluloid presentation, cutting to a projector and establishing the context for this exhibition. It is October 1979, and the footage is part of a poorly-attended lecture delivered by an ageing Korean doctor. The depicted operation, we are told, was conducted upon a Japanese General by a respected Korean surgeon during the colonial period. After dismissing his class, we see the doctor sat at his desk, examining a package that he has received. Inside is a photograph album, found in the ruins of an abandoned hospital scheduled for imminent demolition in which the doctor worked as a young man. He returns to the site of this hospital, now overgrown and dilapidated, with a dead bird lying on the steps of the entrance. From his wanderings, the film abruptly cuts to dinner with his daughter later that evening. Over the meal they discuss the sudden loss of both of the doctor's former wives, each of whom died within a year of their marriage. After his daughter has left, the doctor delivers a voice-over explaining in the past tense that he now realises how a few days in 1942 turned the ensuing years into a continuous nightmare for him, leading to tonight, the night he died.

From its very opening moments, *Epitaph* entwines memory, colonialism and death to construct a narrative that is quite literally haunted by Korea's past. The 1979 sections serve as a framing narrative within the film, enclosing three tales of terror from the doctor's time as a young trainee at Anseng hospital during the Japanese occupation. Across both time periods, spirits emerge as present, active figures in the diegesis, malcontent to remain restrained within the past. Like *Epitaph*, this chapter is about ghosts. I am concerned with the messages that these revenants impart, how their presence symbolises the often unexpected and disorientating persistence of the past into the present, and how by their very apparition they disrupt linear temporality. Although this section of the thesis first discusses *Epitaph* and *The Silenced*, two films which locate their horrors within the history of Korea's colonial period, I am eager to expand the focus of this chapter beyond direct representations of this past such as those discussed in this project's first two chapters. The figure of the ghost is a presence that gestures towards an absence, proposing alternative modes of representation. I wish therefore to transition from discussing a haunted past, to examinations of a present haunted by a specific temporal locus, towards finally a consideration of haunting in Korean cinema that, while not grounded in the colonial period, still bears its ghostly fingerprints.

This chapter is therefore deeply indebted to the 'Spectral Turn' in critical theory, through which ghosts, spectres, phantoms and revenants received renewed attention and were granted heightened analytical weight. As the texts collected together in *The Spectralities Reader* demonstrate, the resurgent critical interest in spectrality in the 1990s and beyond emerges from the coming together of two distinct schools of critical thought, psychoanalysis and Derridean deconstructionism. While in their introduction to the reader, Blanco

and Peeren position the publication of Jacques Derrida's *Spectres de Marx* in 1993 (and its English translation in 1994 as *Spectres of Marx*) as the "catalyst" for what some have called the "spectral turn", they also consider the importance of the Freudian description of the uncanny and the work of trauma studies to the later uses of spectrality as a critical concept.¹ Each of these approaches ascribes certain specific analytical relevance to the ghost, in ways which intersect with the others, but never entirely overlap.

As Freud declares in his much-celebrated essay on the subject, 'the uncanny derives from what was once familiar and then repressed'.² 'From repressions, Freud teaches us, come ghosts', claims Bergland.³ A feeling of the uncanny therefore emerges from the return of something that was previously repressed, a key topic in Freudian thought. Freud further breaks down his notion of the uncanny into two constituent aspects. The uncanny effect is experienced 'either when repressed childhood complexes are revived by some impression or when primitive beliefs that have been *surmounted* appear to be once again confirmed.'⁴ 'This is a dual model of haunting- we are haunted either by the revival of what we have repressed or by the (seeming) confirmation of what we have surmounted'.⁵ What returns therefore is not just the ghost, but our belief in the supernatural, which Freud equates with a primitive, pre-modern understanding of the world. In this description, the uncanny emerges when previous modes of thought that we had understood to be conquered by our rational mind are revealed to be still alive within us. Freud mentions ghosts in his essay, as perhaps 'the most potent' example there is of the effect, but does not expand upon this assertion because this example is 'too much mixed up with the gruesome'.⁶ As Blanco and Peeren point out however, it may well be that what Freud finds truly gruesome is that there are a great number of people

who have not surmounted their beliefs in the supernatural and believe ghosts to be a possible actuality.⁷ In order for the ghost to be uncanny, its appearance must contravene the order of the world as we understand it.

Also from within psychoanalysis comes Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's evocation of the phantom. Their entry into this discussion comes through their interest in 'transgenerational communication, particularly the way in which the undisclosed traumas of previous generations might disturb the lives of their descendants even and especially if they know nothing about their distant causes'.⁸ Abraham and Torok's phantom is the 'presence of a dead ancestor in the living ego, still intent on preventing its traumatic and usually shameful secrets from coming to light'.⁹ It is an 'unconsciously inherited loss or secret', from which intergenerational trauma emerges as a haunting force.¹⁰ Interestingly, the phantom in this instance is not the force of justice or revelation as understood in other evocations. In this case the phantom is a liar, whose effect is to 'mislead the haunted subject and to ensure that its secrets remain shrouded in mystery'.¹¹ As Colin Davis points out, the impact of Abraham and Torok on literary studies has revolved around the revelation of secrets, particularly in response to texts that are 'in distress, harbouring secrets of which they are unaware'.¹² The presence of the phantom, following psychoanalysis, points to a historical secret, a repressed item of knowledge, even if the phantom's own actions may seek to occlude this very fact.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Derrida positions hauntology as an alternative to ontology, 'replacing the priority of being and presence with the figure of the ghost as that which is neither present nor absent, neither dead nor alive'.¹³ Instead of positioning the spectre as a source of insight, it serves as a 'productive opening of meaning'. Derrida's spectre 'does not belong to the order

of knowledge' but makes 'established certainties vacillate'.¹⁴ It is a figure which Julian Wolfreys explains as existing beyond limits. The Derridean spectral exists 'in excess of the limits of definition', at the 'limit to which interpretation can go' as it 'resists conceptualisation' because it has 'already exceeded any definition'.¹⁵ Derrida's attempt, with *Spectres of Marx*, was to reconcile Marxism and deconstruction in the wake of the collapse of socialist states across Europe and the fall of the Berlin Wall. This political, critical element of Derrida's text has been quite widely criticised (some notable examples include texts by Aijaz Ahmad¹⁶, Fredric Jameson¹⁷ and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak¹⁸)¹⁹, but it is the response to Derrida's positioning of the spectral as an avenue of critical enquiry that is of value to this thesis. Although Derrida's text initiated the current spectral turn in critical theory, later forays in the field have sought to add greater context to the critical role a phantom may play. Roger Luckhurst has argued, for example, that positioning the spectre as such an instrument of deconstructive criticism ensures that the act of haunting itself becomes celebrated, but 'the precise content of what is repeated may get lost'.²⁰ As such, this approach 'forgets about the specificities of ghosts, the fact that they appear in specific moments, and specific locations, and also forgets that ghosts are "symptoms, points of rupture that insist their singular tale be retold and their wrongs acknowledged"'.²¹

The more fruitful vein of analysis that has emerged in relation to haunting following Derrida has been in response to his evocation of haunting as a temporal phenomenon. Throughout *Spectres of Marx*, Hamlet's declaration that 'the time is out of joint' becomes a motto for the ways in which the phantom disrupts temporality.²² Derrida's insistence is on haunting as 'a temporal, rather than spatial, phenomenon',²³ and his spectral moment is one that no longer

belongs to the traditional progression of time.²⁴ The disjuncture of time acts in both directions for Derrida's spectre: it is always 'both *revenant* (invoking what was) and *arrivant* (announcing what will come)', and as such 'operates on a number of temporal planes, most crucially the future and its possible interactions with the present and the past'.²⁵ The spectre demonstrates the ways in which the future 'is already always populated with certain possibilities derived from the past' as well as the permeation of the past into the present.²⁶ This approach allows not only for an alternative form of history writing, in which the presence of the spectre disjoints temporality, eluding to the presence of things forgotten or unspoken, and presenting the possibility of alternate futures, but also allows for a critique of the temporal logic of modernity. Following from Derrida's conception of the phantom as temporally disruptive, Bliss Cua Lim utilises the Todorovian notion of the fantastic, that is the moment of hesitation upon encountering the supernatural, including ghosts, as a way of critiquing the homogenous time proscribed by modernity.²⁷ For Lim, the appearance of the supernatural does not solely indicate the persistence of the past into the present; instead it denounces the idea of a single, homogenous time, positing instead the coeval existence of heterogeneous temporalities.²⁸

Finally, in this nexus of spectral returns, and once again concerned with the erasure of temporal distance, comes the influence of Trauma Studies. Trauma has provided a framework for two of the previous chapters, in chapter one through an evocation of how trauma complicates the system of historical representation, and in chapter three through an exploration of the more culturally specific notion of *han*. The psychology of trauma provides an avenue through which we can explore the unbidden infringement of the past into the present. Utilising the language of haunting, Cathy Caruth explains that 'to be

traumatised is precisely to be possessed by an image or event'.²⁹ One of the categories established for the diagnosis of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is the presence of 'intrusion' symptoms, such as intrusive thoughts, nightmares and flashbacks. These symptoms are, like a ghost, unexpected evocations of a past made fantastically present. Adopting the same terminology as Caruth, one could describe the traumatised subject as haunted by their own past. Earlier in this thesis I illustrated key differences between Caruth's and my own utilisation of the concept of trauma, relating to the extent to which the traumatic repetition can be conceived of as an exact, unmediated repetition of the originary trauma. The very fact of the return, that the past refuses to remain contained within its own temporality, links trauma and spectrality. The analysis contained within this and the following chapter will show that although the ghosts of past traumas return to the present, and while they may resemble those lost, a haunting replays a traumatic incident in new locations and temporalities, ensuring that it can never be a literal, mimetic recreation of the traumatic event. An interesting parallel between trauma theory and spectrality is observable in the ways in which both concepts have transitioned from being discussed as symptomatic of the individual to that of the collective. In this thesis' opening chapter I discussed the ways in which collective trauma has become a key concept in interrogating a troubled national past. Bergland argues that the Enlightenment brought about a change to the way people discussed ghosts. 'Family ghosts became less important, while communal ghosts grew more significant. "Enlightened" people began to speak less and less about the ghosts of their ancestors and more about the spectres that haunted their imagined national communities'.³⁰ The haunted national culture thus becomes a corollary to cultural trauma.

As Blanco and Pereen state, ghosts 'are part of a symptomology of trauma, as they become both the objects of and metaphors for a wounded historical experience'.³¹ However, the overlap between haunting and trauma is not absolute. Caruth's conception of the traumatic return is defined by her belief in its mimetic relation to the initial traumatic event,³² whereas the ghost 'does not necessarily reappear in exactly the same manner or guise'.³³ Also, as Avery F. Gordon notes, there is a difference in the effects of trauma and haunting; 'haunting, unlike trauma, is distinctive for producing a something-to-be-done'.³⁴ The revenant returns to incite action, whereas the traumatic recurrence lacks agency. The righting of the wrongs to which the spectre attests is an outward facing action, taking place in the present into which the past has impinged, whereas the healing of trauma is an introspective act, in which the traumatic incident is separated from its negative affect in the realm of memory.

The healing of trauma points to another distinctive aspect of its model of spectrality that is worth teasing out. Trauma studies, stemming from its inception in the medical world, seeks to settle the traumatic past and exorcise the phantoms of history. The spectral equivalent of this process is the focus of the following chapter in this thesis. Derrida, however, implores us 'to learn to live with ghosts'.³⁵ Their critical function as a conceptual metaphor contains, in his schema, philosophical, ethical, and political potential.³⁶ Trauma and Derridean hauntology similarly differ in their relationship to historical specificity. The 'historical overdetermination' of certain branches of trauma studies stands in marked contrast to the historically unmoored evocation of spectrality proposed by Derrida and discussed above.³⁷ A synthesis of these two approaches can allow for a greater notion of context to enter into our readings of hauntings. Whilst different hauntings may share certain characteristics in

common, differences in their articulations and referents should direct us to the specificities of their historical contexts.

From the confluence of these different schools of thought's focus on a single critical object, which are at times contradictory but ultimately complementary, we can derive a methodological approach to the figure of the ghost in texts. The spirit is above all a return: of an individual, of the repressed, of a non-contemporary temporality, of a traumatic incident. Its presence alerts us to concealed secrets, although the spectre itself may act to ensure these secrets remain as such. As a structural anomaly, it presents a challenge to ontological hierarchy, privileging absence over presence and illustrating that 'the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be'.³⁸ The ghost's resurrection brings with it a form of belief, that either we have consigned to the past and are now forced to acknowledge lives on, or that we must accept was never really supplanted by modernity and the enlightenment. Above all in importance for this study, the revenant is an allegorical figure, illustrating the ways in which our present is permeated by the traumatic incidents of the past. As a call to memory they articulate what has been buried in the national consciousness and illustrate the presence of the multiple narratives that simmer beneath the official historical record.

Colonial Hauntings

I return now to *Epitaph*, utilising the framework elaborated above to demonstrate the ways in which the film is doubly haunted, at both the textual and extra-textual level. The framing narrative, of which the opening section was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, encloses three intertwined stories of haunting that occur over the course of four days in 1942 in a hospital in colonial

Korea. The third of these stories is of greater relevance to the following chapter, where it is briefly discussed in relation to how is concerned with amnesia and schizophrenia as aspects of the traumatic response. The second story presents its ghosts very much in the vein of a traumatic repetition, and while it is the least fruitful from the perspective of a critical reading, it is drenched with a feeling of uncanny dread that lingers beyond the film's closing credits. A young girl, Asako is brought to the hospital following a car crash that has killed the rest of her family. She is revealed to be miraculously unharmed physically, but suffers from horrifying nightmares and aphasia, symptoms her psychiatrist attributes to the trauma of her experience. In her dreams Asako sees terrifying visions of her mother and stepfather, bloodied and scarred by the accident, as well as the phantom figure of an old woman, carrying a faceless infant. The nightmare scenes provide a haunted re-inscription of the original traumatic event. Through them we learn of Asako's strong affection for her stepfather, and see the old woman lurch out suddenly from the shadows. Ultimately it is revealed that Asako was responsible for the accident, and the spectral figures she has been visited by are its victims. While on a drive, Asako reacted with jealousy towards her mother for the affections she receives from her step-father. She leaps from the rear seat to embrace him, causing the steering wheel to swerve and direct the car into an elderly woman who was crossing the street, a child strapped to her back. The spectres Asako sees, although highly stylised, have real historical referents in her life, and revealing them illuminates the circumstance of her trauma, allowing her to own up to her guilt. Although the concepts of spectres and apparitions are tied to a notion of visibility, of what has been impossibly seen, *Epitaph* makes exceptional use of sound design to illustrate the haunting of Asako. The hideous chirping sounds that the ghost of her mother makes

pierce through the silence of the hospital, and when coupled with the flurry of facial twitches and spasms of the phantom's visage, invoke Freud's description of seizures and other such involuntary bodily actions as uncanny. Less immediately perceptible but just as striking are the partially obscured sounds of a child's wailing interlaced into the soundscape of Asako's terrors. Before we see the phantom faceless child, we are alerted to its impending arrival, its presence on the soundtrack highlighting its absence in the cinematic frame, as well as its no-longer-presentness in the diegesis, due to its untimely death.

While the second of *Epitaph*'s tales illustrates the way in which the presence of phantoms can narrativise the traumatic process, the first tale, and its connections to the framing narrative, speaks to a much greater lengthening out of historical repercussion. In this section, the young Park Jung-nam, the doctor we see in the framing narrative, is a hopeless young trainee. Despite being engaged to the daughter of the hospital's director, a woman he has never met, he finds himself being inexplicably drawn to the body of a girl who had committed suicide, now interred in the building's mortuary. In one scene, he is dragged by the girl's ghost into an apparently empty vault, and we see a series of stylised vignettes depicting Park and the girl's life together, across a progression of backdrops representing the passing of seasons. It is revealed at the close of the episode that the young girl is the director's daughter, the same girl to whom Park is engaged. The director conducts a ritual, unbeknownst to Park, to wed him to the soul of her dead daughter, in the hope that this will prevent her finding the man with whom she committed suicide in the afterlife. With hindsight, we understand that this girl is the same figure that we observed lurking towards the edges of the frame in the film's introductory section, during Park's dinner with his daughter. What we might initially have mistaken for

another daughter is revealed in this episode to be Park's spectral bride, who has followed him for the past thirty-seven years, and whose presence perhaps explains the surprising mortality of Park's later wives. The legacy of Park's actions in the colonial era is quite literally depicted as haunting him well into the post-liberatory period. In the second of the 1979 sections that closes the film, Park discovers a sketch he did of the dead girl and finally addresses his ghostly bride. By allowing himself to reminisce, with the assistance of his photograph album, his past is finally able to become consciously present. As the ghost moves towards the elderly Park, we see a reflection of his younger-self in her eyes. (Figure 4.1) The presence of the ghost acts as a bridge between different temporalities, demonstrating how the past persists far beyond its allotted historical moment. As this spectral figure reaches Park, he dies, and in doing so enters back into the realm of the spectral. The film's final moments return to Anseng hospital, first to scenes of its demolition, then back to 1942. The very final image is a freeze-frame of Park, instantly graded in colour and texture to resemble the historical photographs through which he had relived the events of the film. For me, this closing image cannot help but feel highly ironic, given how over the previous ninety-eight minutes *Epitaph* has demonstrated the past to be anything but frozen, fixed and aged.



Figure 4.1: Elderly Park sees a reflection of his younger self in the eyes of his ghostly wife at the moment of his death. (from *Epitaph*)

One of the striking aspects of *Epitaph*'s depiction of haunting is the way in which it is concerned with its temporal dimension far above and beyond the consideration of its spatial aspects. Despite Anseng's labyrinthine corridors, occluding screens, and intermittent supply of electric light, *Epitaph* ultimately fails to capitalise on the gothic potential of its evocative environs. The hospital serves primarily as a meeting point allowing each of these disparate horror stories to intersect, rather than as a malignant force that influences the sway of the narrative. Even the inherent creepiness of its abandoned and ruined form is overwritten by its temporal aspects. Rather than providing a source of atmospheric scares, the scene in which the elder Park walks through the ruins of his former workplace act, in the first place, to visualise the passage of time between the two historical periods of the film's setting, but also to narrativise the

investigation of the past which governs the central sections of the film. The central body of *Epitaph*'s narrative is a walk through the temporal space of Park's memories as he flicks through his photo album, scenes which follow his attempt to regain access to his own history by returning to the same physical space. Indeed, the temporal return is demonstrated to be by far the most evocative by the film; where Park's spatial return is marked solely by cobwebs and darkened corridors, his temporal return is a vivid, vibrant, haunting experience.

The spirits which haunt *Epitaph* are not limited to the film's textual revenants. The film's temporal structure, which presents an historical past through the reminiscences of a character whose own present is his audience's past, places three different historical moments in dialogue with each other. 2007, the year of the film's release, looks back upon 1979 and 1942, and the presence of phantoms within the text provides a metaphor for the ways in which a historical moment is always infused with those which precede it. In chasing the historical traces at play within *Epitaph*, my aim is not, following the psychoanalytical model discussed previously, to illuminate the secrets and lacunae within the histories of those who created the film. Rather, I am keen to explore how when one invokes a past, to summon a ghost as it were, that spirit is accompanied by multiple historical voices, each of which brings an historical perspective to bear upon the text.

The framing narrative of *Epitaph* takes place across a single day, the day on which Park Jung-nam dies. The film opens by telling its audience that this day is in October 1979, and a calendar visible in the corner of one shot in Dr Park's living room reveals the full date to be October 26th, the day on which, in the extra-cinematic world, South Korean President Park Chung-hee was

assassinated. Not only does Dr. Park share his date of death and Korean surname with the former dictator, but as Kyu Hyun Kim has noted in his review of the film, the Japanese name that the doctor adopted during the colonial period, Takaki Masao, is the same as that used by the former president.³⁹ It is this name that graces the cover of the photo album that sends the film spiralling back into the horror-strewn past of its protagonist. Alongside the imminent assassination of the president, the film also points to 1979 as a period of tumultuous, pro-democracy political demonstration. Addressing his lecture, Dr. Park asks his audience to remind their classmates who are absent at a protest to remember to attend the coming exam. As he walks home, he passes through a crowd of young people waving placards. Derrida's philosophy of hauntology spawned a movement across multiple artforms in which temporality plays a defining role. Andrew Gallix poetically describes one aspect of the hauntological movement as 'a nostalgia for all of our lost futures'.⁴⁰ This is the Future Anterior, 'remembered in advance and fully accounted for, always to only ever slip away as it slides backwards into the future'.⁴¹ The unfulfilled promise of 1979 that *Epitaph* resurrects is the aborted pro-democracy movement. Following the assassination of Park Chung-hee there was what Michael E. Robinson describes as 'a genuine hope that country could bring its politics in line with the remarkable economic and social developments' of the 1960s and 1970s.⁴² Any slight glimmer of optimism that South Korea might transition towards a more democratic system of government was quickly extinguished by the military *coup d'état* orchestrated by Chun Doo-hwan in the final weeks of 1979. The association of Dr. Park with President Park not only alludes to a legacy of colonial collaboration that tainted those involved in the political system in the post-liberation years (a point discussed in much greater detail in the following

chapter), but also points to the aborted promise for a democratic future experienced by the Republic of Korea at the turn of that decade. Park's untimely death contained the potential to herald in the beginning of a new future for South Korea, finally able to demolish the legacy of its troubled past. This is the political equivalent of the demolition of Anseng Hospital depicted at the end of *Epitaph*. However, instead of this moment setting the nation on a new course, it stands as the point at which the democratic promise of the future was deferred.

The historical traces within *Epitaph* permeate each section of the film. The film's hospital sequences all take place during a four-day span in February of 1942, during which Park's voiceover tells us that 'imperialism was at its height'. This month saw significant Japanese military attacks upon Java, Australia and a small bombing of the US mainland, as well as Britain's surrender of Singapore to the Japanese forces. February 1942 also saw the signing in the United States of Executive order 9066, an article which provided the legal framework for the relocation of those with Japanese ancestry to internment camps. It is also the month of the 'official' birthday of Kim Jong-il, the leader of North Korea at the time of the film's release. As part of the ritual that binds Park's soul to that of the deceased girl who haunts the framing narrative, we learn that his birth date was the 3rd of June, 1920. This date does not correspond to conflagration of Dr Park with his presidential namesake (who was born on the 14th November 1917), nor is it a date that appears to have any particular significance in the history of colonial Korea. However, it is on this same day that on one of the Hawaiian Islands, A Japanese man, Juzaburo Sakakami, working as a translator in the sugar industry, had his house partially destroyed in a dynamite attack. This event, and the labour strike to which it

appears to be related, may have failed to impact on many histories of the Japanese Empire, but in her book on the incident and its aftermaths, Masayo Umezawa Duus argues that it had far reaching consequences. These Hawaiian incidents, Duus claims, 'became part of the process' that led to the passing of the Exclusion Act of 1924, a move which 'was to cast a long shadow on future relations between Japan and the United States' and marked a 'step toward' the coming conflict in the Pacific.⁴³ The Exclusion Act ultimately equated to the removal of the right of migration to the United States for all Asians, including the Japanese, a situation which led to extensive protests within Japan and a growing sense of hostility towards the United States from an increasingly militarist Japanese government.⁴⁴

It is historical traces such as these that become apparent when one chases and traces spectres. Through allusion historical events are evoked, whilst simultaneously divested of their more established contexts. These recalled moments may appear, on the surface at least, to be unrelated, but in providing an environment in which these moments can interact, the filmmakers allow for new connections to be unearthed. In the context of this chapter, I consider this approach to be a mode of historical writing, one that eschews the conventions of historiography. As a literal incarnation of the recurrence of the past in the present, the ghost is a perfect vessel through which to explore the ellipses and lacunae of the national historical memory.

Although it is primarily the ways in which the ghost story allows for the return of overlooked history that I am interested in here, it is vital that one does not ignore the particular contexts of the events that are returning. What is the purpose of resurrecting these specific incidents in *Epitaph*? If the text points towards a bombing in Hawaii and the assassination of a former President, what

links are to be drawn? I suggest that in the case of *Epitaph*, it is the film's final line that points the way. We hear a young Dr Park, in a voiceover, declare that 'back then we thought this would last forever'. The referent of this statement is left ambiguous. By setting the narrative on the day on which President Park was killed, and doubling this day as the death of the film's protagonist, the film is imbued with a layer of finality that makes this statement appear like an expression of youthful folly. The 'this' to which he refers could be read as the hospital, which we see being demolished in the film's final scenes, but if one understands that it is colonialism which he thought would last forever, the historical events referenced in the film are shed in a new light.

If, as Duus argues, the attack on Sakamaki's house was part of a movement to which the US government responded by enacting the Exclusion Act of 1924, an act which increased the hostilities between the US and Japan, then the attack can be considered an instigator for one of the first salvos in a dispute that would lead to the Pacific War, a conflict whose consequences would ultimately end up liberating Korea. Likewise, Executive Order 9066 and the Japanese attacks which took place in the February of 1942, mark points of escalation in the war. If these references point towards the geopolitical consequences that would bring about the end of colonialism, then the 1979 section points to the destruction of its legacy. By demolishing the physical remnants of the period through the destruction of the hospital, as well as portraying the death of Dr Park, and alluding to the assassination of Park Chung-hee, both figures who collaborated as part of the Japanese colonial project, *Epitaph* suggests a nation being purged of its colonial legacy.⁴⁵ Any feelings of optimism that the post '79 era would be free of colonial history, however, should be tempered by the film's key message that the past is always

haunting. Dr Park was unable to see that phantom that followed him throughout his life. It would be foolish to assume, the film suggests, that just because we cannot see these ghosts they are not there.

Another film which richly evokes a colonial setting as a source for horror and spectres is Lee Hae-young's *The Silenced* (2015). Released in Korea under its original title of *Gyeongseong Hakgyo: Sarajin Sonyeodeul* (Gyeongseong School: Missing Girls) both titles bring interesting readings to bear upon the film's evocation of the history it reproduces. Set in 1938, at an all-girls sanatorium in a remote location, the film follows the experiences of Shizuko/ Cha Ju-ran after her enrolment. Shizuko's arrival follows the disappearance of another one of the students, also named Shizuko. During Shizuko's stay at the institution, further students go missing, she experiences a series of ghostly encounters across the grounds, and the treatment she undergoes for her tuberculosis results in the development of some extraordinary powers. The film ultimately reveals that the girls in the sanatorium are being used as test subjects in an experiment organised between the headmistress of the institute and the Japanese military. The goal of the experiment is to produce modified subjects, insensitive to pain, with enhanced human strengths and the 'possibility of superhuman power', 'superhuman soldiers' to be utilised in the Japanese war effort. Notes on the experiment reveal that adolescent girls are the prime subjects for this process. The depiction of a group of adolescent girls enlisted against their knowledge or will, into the service of the more depraved instincts of the Japanese military draws an obvious parallel to the comfort women. In previous chapters I have discussed how this traumatic issue has been addressed both explicitly and implicitly by contemporary filmmakers. This

evocation in *The Silenced* is in keeping with the techniques discussed in chapter one, in relation to *Private Eye* and *Fighter In The Wind*.

The 'missing girls' of the film's original title are the ghosts that Shizuko sees around the institute, girls who 'suddenly went back home', but are revealed to have been killed by the experiment. As well as 'missing girls', *Sarajin Sonyeodeul* has alternately been translated as 'lost girls' and 'disappeared girls'. Both 'lost' and 'missing' point to the absence of these characters, misplaced from both the present and the historical record, but the term 'disappeared' brings with it the force of agency. The girls have not just gone missing, but have been forcefully removed and erased. The term 'disappeared' is one adopted by the United Nations Council on Human Rights to refer to victims of political suppression. Their definition combines three elements: the removal of liberty, state acquiescence, and a refusal to acknowledge the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared individual.⁴⁶ Historically, the term has been used to refer to victims of conflicts as disparate as 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland, the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet in Chile, and in Francoist Spain. In the context of the film's narrative, the girls killed by the project fit the tripartite definition of the disappeared as explained above. The English title, *The Silenced*, also brings the element of external agency into discussion. The sanatorium's girls, victims of Japanese militaristic desire, are unable to articulate their experiences themselves. They have been silenced and disappeared. The depravation of an historical voice from the girls is a theme reflected in *The Silenced* by the frequent recurrence of journals. Upon arriving at the sanatorium, Shizuko has her personal diary taken from her, a decorated green, hard-backed book, and is later given a plain brown notebook to use as a journal. The latter journals are used to chart the health of

the sanatorium's occupants by the headmistress, and thus enter into the official records. In this instance, medical records become a form of historiography; however, the personal diary, which records the individual experiences of the girls, is censured. One of the other girls in the institution gives Shizuko the diary of her namesake who disappeared before her arrival, which had been kept concealed in an apparently basement room that the characters repeatedly return to. Through this diary, Shizuko is granted a glimpse into the past, and the first suggestions of the conspiracy that she will unveil.

The basement room plays an interesting role in *The Silenced*, emerging as a space where the girls can act outside of the colonial domination that governs the rest of the institution. Shizuko's friend Kazue/ Hong Yeon-deok introduces her to this room, and it is here that they tell each other their 'real' (meaning Korean) names. Through flashbacks we see snapshots of Kazue and the first Shizuko's friendship as it played out beyond the glare of the administration. The room is the site of authentic memory, rather than the sanitised space of the sanatorium. A dusty space, strewn with leaves, cobwebs and debris, it represents the passage of time in a natural way. Although it is the site of a traumatic event - the death of the first Shizuko - it is not a haunted space. The ghosts of the institution return only in the officiated spaces, from which they have been forcefully removed by the administration. Haunting, as I have discussed, has a spatial as well as a temporal dimension, and is a force most active in the spaces from which temporality appears to have been erased. This reading of the film as presenting two spaces, each with a different approach to inscribing the past, is borne out by the very closing moments of the film. Shizuko, using her superhuman powers, has dismantled the project, destroyed much of the institution and killed the headmistress. She has been

fatally wounded, and sits next to the body of Kazue, at the end of a corridor where the bodies of the disappeared girls are displayed. They are positioned in adjacent cells, frozen, an act which isolates them from the passage of time. The film then cuts to a memory of Ju-ran and Yeon-deok in the basement room, bathed in a warm yellow glow in stark contrast to the icy blue hues of the preceding scene. The two girls toy with a broken record player, hoping to bring it back to life. As an analogue form of audio reproduction, a record is an indexical capture of an historical moment. It freezes a moment of the past. The girls manage to revive the record player, and the music, captured on a slab of shellac, plays out over the closing credits. Unlike the rest of the institution, where the girls are frozen in death, the basement is a space where the past can return rather than haunt. In their final moments, both *Epitaph* and *The Silenced* turn to a form of recording to highlight an indexical persistence of the past into the present. Previously I discussed how in *Epitaph* the use of a photograph seems less than fitting, given the film's focus on the active roles that the ghosts of the past play. More in keeping with the message of the film is the celluloid presentation with which the film opens, an evocation more closely akin to the audio recording which closes *The Silenced*. The obvious parallel is to the medium which we are watching as an audience. Although the transfer to digital, in recording, distribution, or both, has served to remove the indexical aspect from the cinematic medium, these films, both literally and allegorically, bring the past back to life. Reproduction of the past is an aspect inherent to the cinematic form, and both texts have infused this aspect of the medium into their narratives. In their historical settings, *Epitaph* and *The Silenced* resurrect the colonial period to highlight how the past is not always frozen and inactive. The record player, once silenced, is silent no longer.

Reading *Epitaph* and *The Silenced* as films with a keen interest in the nature of historical memory and the persistence of the past into the present is perhaps not that striking given their historical narrative setting. Tom Gunning states that ghosts, 'as revenants of things past... make vivid to us the pairings of memory and forgetting'.⁴⁷ In *Epitaph*, we see how forgetting can leave us blind to the persistence of the past into our lived experience of the present. *The Silenced* however shows us that sometimes 'forgetting' is not always so simple a process, and that various agents may take action to ensure that certain parts of the historical record are allowed to be forgotten. In this sense, I read both films as political texts, critical of South Korean society's failure to address the colonial period in an effective manner. Jean-Claude Schmitt points to an interesting dynamic at play within these films when he suggests that 'hauntings are the result of an inability to forget, due to an incomplete process of memorialisation'.⁴⁸ Incomplete memorialisation, rather than hastening a moment's withdrawal from a collective consciousness, instead prolongs its presence. 'To forget the dead we must first remember them'.⁴⁹ Although in my reading of *The Silenced* I singled out the comfort women as a key allegorical model through which to interpret the film, this could easily extend to all those whose experience of Japanese colonialism has not found suitable inscription in the historical record. It is striking that while the spectres of *The Silenced* and *Epitaph* have no lack of agency in their respective films, they all lack voices. Whether it is the tortured chirping of Asako's mother or the muted impassiveness of Park Jung-nam's deceased bride, these colonised ghosts speak to the ordeals of the past through their presence rather than through their voices.

Contemporary Hauntings

In the remains of this chapter I hope to use *Epitaph* and *The Silenced* as an opening, or a cypher perhaps, that reveals what has often been overlooked. Why is the confluence of temporalities I have discussed thus far applicable only to films with an historical setting? I argue that hauntings implicitly engage with the return of history, and that contemporary-set narratives are as similarly haunted by a national past as those set within that past. In two contemporary-set films we can observe a concern, similar to that expressed in *Epitaph*, about the way in which the colonial past refuses to remain buried and instead haunts the postcolonial period.

The Doll Master opens with a scene set at an unspecified moment in the colonial period. A young man has fallen in love with a woman, and crafted a life-sized doll in her likeness, which in turn develops consciousness and falls in love with her creator. The object of the man's affection is murdered by an unknown perpetrator; however, he is seized and executed by a mob for the act, leaving the doll abandoned. The film depicts this act as echoing into the present day, as the remainder of the narrative depicts the brutal demise of a group pursued by the doll's vengeful spirit. Although the conclusion of the film reveals that the murders depicted are the actions of a different vengeful doll made incarnate, it is the narrative's colonial legacy that propels the film forwards. The apparently unrelated ensemble gathered together at a remote location are exposed as descendants of those responsible for the film's originary trauma. The doll maker who summoned this group together has been possessed by the spirit of the colonial doll, and has organised this gathering as an opportunity to enact justice. The presence of the doll's spirit reveals the facts concealed by history, but in this instance, it is not a correction of an official historical record, but of the

memories passed down through generations. The characters gathered together by the spirit are, unsurprisingly, unaware of the crimes of their grandparents.

There are myriad ways in which we, as individuals, are exposed to our culture's past. If *Epitaph* and *The Silenced* point towards the ways in which the official historical record has failed to engage with the troubling moments of colonialism accurately, in *The Doll Master* there is a demonstration that other forms of historiography can be as equally flawed. The cross-generational transmission of memory was discussed in chapter one in relation to trauma, and will be a key theme for the final sections of this thesis. The family is a key agent in the education of a new generation, but if this transmission of knowledge across generations is hampered by a trauma (which, although traditionally understood as relating to victims, in this film is the culpability of the perpetrators that has been suppressed), the ensuing understanding of the past in the following generation is inescapably impacted.

In contrast to the films discussed previously, the doll's spirit does not appear in the text as a haunting presence, but as a possessing one. Possession is similarly a key theme in *The Red Shoes*, another film which sites the origins of its horror in the colonial period. The narrative revolves around a series of gruesome deaths, all of which are connected by the film's titular footwear. While trying to discover the root of the horror that has surrounded her, the film's protagonist, Sun-jae, uncovers a story of jealousy and murder from 1944. The act of revealing this hidden story demonstrates the importance of place to phantoms in providing an opening of the historical record. Firstly, it is the appearance of the phantom, articulated in this instance by murder, that disturbs the stability of the diegesis and instigates the process of investigation. This investigation engages with history in both the public arena, depicted via the

trawling through of archival newspapers, and the personal, in discussion with an elderly woman who witnessed much of the tragedy first-hand. This woman is herself an almost spectral presence, illegally inhabiting the liminal spaces of Sun-jae's apartment block, appearing and disappearing like a ghost. However, both of these avenues of enquiry are only able to provide fragments of the overall story. It is through haunting, and the visions transmitted to Sun-jae when she encounters the ghost, that both she and the audience are able to adequately piece together the events that unfolded in 1944. Haunting erases the ellipses of personal and public historical records, filling them with obscured counter-narratives, or, as Judith Richardson describes in a more general context, 'ghosts operate as a particular, and peculiar, kind of social memory, an alternate form of history-making in which things usually forgotten, discarded, or repressed become foregrounded'.⁵⁰

The haunting in *The Red Shoes* speaks to the palimpsestic nature of urban space. Haunting, as discussed, is a temporal disturbance, but here not only serves as a spatial phenomenon, but also illustrates the way in which temporality is inscribed upon spaces. The film opens in a glistening, hyper-modern subway station, a site to which the film often returns. In contrast, the apartment block in which Sun-jae lives, adjoining the station, is dilapidated to the point of appearing almost derelict. The passage of time is inscribed into the very fabric of the building, each stain an indexical reminder of the building's past lives. During her investigation, Sun-jae learns that the dance-hall where the deaths in 1944 occurred has since been demolished, and is now the site where her apartment and the station are located. It is in the metro station where the cursed shoes were first discovered, and it is in the apartment building that the ghost frequently appears. Both spaces are indicative of the fact that

although the physical manifestations of the past can be demolished or overwritten, their legacy is not so easily annihilated. The symbolism of this historical space is very specifically coded within *The Red Shoes*. Aside from being the site of brutal murder, the dance-hall is repeatedly associated with the iconography of the colonial occupation. The majority of the flashbacks we see of the dance-hall occur during a lavish balletic production. In the performance, the dancers wear Japanese military uniform, and are being watched by an audience made up of Japanese officers. At the crescendo of one movement, the stage dressing falls away to reveal an enormous Japanese imperial flag. It is in front of this flag that the first act of murderous spectral revenge occurs, with a couple being entwined by a phantom rope and then dramatically hanged, silhouetted against a signifier of Japanese oppression. The destruction of the dance-hall therefore stands in for a much wider process of structural dismantling, one in which the physical legacy of the colonial period has been replaced by the quotidian symbols of contemporary urban life. Outside of the world of the film, this tendency is perhaps demonstrated by the fate of the Government General building which formerly dominated central Seoul, and was the seat of the colonial government. In 1996, the building was demolished and some of its ruins were relocated to the Independence Hall of Korea, a museum in Cheonan which celebrates anti-colonial activities of Korean patriots. (Figure 4.2)



Figure 4.2: Ruins of the Government General Building relocated to the Independence Hall in Cheonan. (Author's photograph, 8th April 2014)

As Kyoung-Lae Kang has explored, the demolition of the Government General building is just one aspect of how this area in the nation's capital has become a site in which history and space are entwined.⁵¹ The redevelopment of Gwanghwamun Square, where this building once stood, has seen the government mobilise historical figures (particularly Admiral Yi Sun-sin, a nationalist hero who fought off a Japanese invasion force) in an attempt to transform the temporal traces of the space. The spatial aspect of the spectral turn has been described by Blanco and Pereen as reaffirming 'the idea that places have history; more than that, they contain layers of history that, although seemingly erased by time, can be recalled (though not necessarily fully separated) through processes of active remembrance as re-membering, re-

composing'.⁵² In *The Red Shoes*, access to the temporal traces of the spaces in which the characters live involves such an active process, namely that of investigation, in order to reveal what the restructuring of the urban environment has concealed. Demolition and reconstruction are an example of how elements of the national past have been removed and concealed from the historical record.

The South Korean Supernatural Horror Film

Thus far, all of the films discussed in this chapter have been explicitly constructed to link their evocation of the spectral with Korea's colonial experience. They are however a tiny fraction of a much wider generic corpus within which the issues discussed above recur ceaselessly. Focussing upon the figure of the ghost as the active catalyst for my analysis, I am positioning this work within the broad territory of the horror genre, at least at the level of its reception by both critics and audiences, and more specifically within the sub-genre of 'supernatural horror'. While the horror film is hardly a new genre within South Korean cinema (Alison Pierse and Daniel Martin's edited collection on the subject takes the 1960s, in particular the 1960 release of Kim Ki-young's *The Housemaid* [*Hanyeo*], as the book's starting point⁵³), the time period with which this thesis is concerned roughly corresponds to the genre's resurgence since 1998. This year marked the release of *Whispering Corridors* (Park Ki-hyeong), a film which ended up being the third most successful film of the year at the box office, and thus helped to initiate the current cinematic horror cycle.⁵⁴ The 1980s and 1990s saw a growing investment in South Korean cinema by the nation's *chaebol* (conglomerate businesses), leading to a demand for more commercially-orientated filmmaking. Horror films, with their comparatively low

production costs, offered a viable approach for a number of the independent production companies of the time.⁵⁵ The seasonal release schedule for such films (horror movies are traditionally in cinemas over the summer in South Korea), combined with the appearance of horror franchises, (such as the *Whispering Corridors* films,⁵⁶ as well as more recent attempts such as the *Death Bell*⁵⁷ and the portmanteau *Horror Stories*⁵⁸ films), as well as the presence of directors repeatedly working within the horror genre, such as Ahn Byeong-ki, has served to define an easily recognisable cycle at work within the industry.

Within this buoyant current of horror movies are a number of texts in which ghosts and haunting play an active role. In my analysis of *Epitaph*, *The Silenced*, *The Doll Master* and *The Red Shoes*, I am not concerned with the fact that they construct fictional stories within the context of Korea's colonial period, instead my interest is in the ways in which these tales allegorically point to wider questions of memorialisation, memory and temporality within wider South Korean culture. If the spectral nature of the colonial spectre is the more troublesome aspect of its identity, is there more that can be unearthed on this topic by considering less specifically temporally rooted phantoms? In expanding beyond texts which specifically position their spectres in relation to the colonial period, this chapter engages with two different theorisations of the relationship between the ghost and its origins. Thus far my approach in this respect is in line with Agamben's assertion that 'a spectre always carries with it a date wherever it goes: it is, in other words, an intimately historical entity'⁵⁹, however, moving forward my analysis is closer in line with Derrida's argument that "haunting is historical, to be sure, but it is not *dated*, it is never docilely given a date in the chain of presents, day after day, according to the instituted order of a

calendar'.⁶⁰ By looking at ghosts who have been less temporally demarcated, or perhaps located within a non-colonial temporality, do we find the same concerns echoed? In pursuing such an analysis, there are three areas of the wider South Korean supernatural horror film that I feel merit discussion in this respect, namely the persistence of folk beliefs into the modern era, the prevalence of ghost narratives set within a school context, and the frequent convergence of haunting with new technologies and new media.

As Bliss Cua Lim has stated in her study of fantastic cinema, 'the return of the dead, the recurrence of events - refuses the linear progression of modern time consciousness, flouting the limits of mortality and historical time'.⁶¹

Mobilised as a form of temporal critique, the ghost challenges the way in which modern society measures and regulates time as 'divisible into units' that are equivalent and successive.⁶² More than presenting a challenge in this mode however, the ghost also points to the presence of, perhaps the persistence of, belief structures that are incompatible with post-enlightenment modernity.

Reinhart Koselleck has argued that the 'geographical opening up of the globe', as a result of imperialist expansion, 'brought to light *various but coexisting cultural levels which were*, through the process of synchronous comparison, *then ordered diachronically*'.⁶³ Modes of existence outside the parameters of western modernity were thus ordered as being *pre-modern*, rather than merely non-modern. The politic of colonialism ultimately translated 'multiple ways of inhabiting the world into a single, homogenous time', a hierarchical structure 'in which some were advanced and others backward'.⁶⁴ I have addressed this linear perception of modernity in South Korea, in relation to the colonial legacy, in chapter two. Stemming from this philosophy then, 'narratives of supernatural

agency are merely the persistence of surmounted thought, a form of mythic survival, a relic of a prior age'.⁶⁵

The appearance of ghosts within contemporary South Korean supernatural films are, by this definition, evidence of the contemporaneity of the noncontemporaneous, the persistence of the so-called pre-modern into the post-modern world. This is emphasised by the tendency for a number of the films to refer heavily to folkloric beliefs and practices within their diegeses. The most notable aspect of this trait is the figure of the ghost itself, or more accurately, herself. Across the vast majority of contemporary ghost films, not limited to the four films discussed in length above, the *Whispering Corridors* films, *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Kim Jee-woon, 2004) and *Arang* (Ahn Sang-hoon, 2006) to name but a few, the spectral figures belong to the *cheonyeo gwishin* archetype. This is the ghost of a virgin girl, dead before she could complete her Confucian duty, and often depicted as wearing *sobok* (traditional mourning clothes), and with her long hair down (tied up hair was symbolic of marriage).⁶⁶ An iconic example of a *cheonyeo gwishin* is found in the folk story of Arang. Arang, a magistrate's daughter, is lured away from her home one night and is raped and murdered. From that day forth, every new magistrate who was appointed to this region died during their first night. Eventually a brave young magistrate appears in the town. On his first night, he encounters the ghost of Arang, and in doing so realizes that it was the shock of seeing her that had killed his predecessors. Arang speaks to him of her tragedy, and through the magistrate justice is achieved.⁶⁷ This story has been interpreted as a critique of patriarchal society, as it is only through her death that Arang is granted a voice, and is only able to reveal herself as a victim of male violence through another male figure, that of the magistrate.⁶⁸ This story is loosely adapted and updated

in the 2006 film *Arang*. This film, like the folk-story that inspired it, contains within itself an implicit critique of patriarchal violence. Min-jeong, the stand-in for Arang in this version, is brutally gang-raped by a group of young men, who proceed to murder her boyfriend when he catches them in the act. The parents of the young men band together to keep the event under-wraps, enlisting the help of a local policeman who murders Min-jeong in order to silence her. In this telling, the brave magistrate is a female detective, So-young, who is herself recovering from her own experience as a victim of an unpunished sexual assault. Both women are depicted as having suffered at the hands of a patriarchal society, and the film plays with their position as simultaneous victims and heroines. Only So-young is able to dismantle the conspiracy constructed by Min-jeong's abusers, including her partner on the force, and in doing so uncovers Min-jeong's body and brings her murder to justice. Min-jeong, while victimised in life, has developed supernatural powers in death and has enacted revenge for herself and, as shown in the film's final frames, tracked down So-young's attacker. Whilst 'pre'-modern folk stories may innocently persist into the modern world, the film suggests that real horrors emerge when an outmoded gender hierarchy that presents women as disposable are allowed to haunt the present. Min-jeong returns to enter a structure of patriarchal abuse that, like her, refused to stay confined to history.

The iconography of the *cheonyeo gwishin* in contemporary ghost films, while rooted in a national folklore tradition, has been influenced significantly by concurrent trends in global cinema, in particular the depiction of *onryō* in contemporary Japanese horror cinema. Her iconography defined by recurrence in Kabuki theatre, the *onryō* 'has wild, long black hair (often, though not always, wet). She wears her white burial kimono. And her face is pale, white'.⁶⁹ She, like

the *cheonyeo gwishin*, is the spirit of a woman wronged, unable to find peace, who enters the material realm from the spiritual in order to exact vengeance. Due to the global success of *Ring* (Hideo Nakata, 1998) and *Ju-on: The Grudge* (Takashi Shimizu, 2002), two films which heavily feature the *onryō* as an avenging force in their narratives, and the later aping of their iconography from a stream of imitators, the female ghost with long black hair covering her face has become a cliché symbol of East Asian horror in the new millennium. Korean cinema has capitalised on the global viability of this horror figure repeatedly, and in a film such as *The Wig* (Won Shin-yun, 2005), almost to the point of parody. In *Arang*, the ghost of Min-jeong stalks one of her victims, scraping her fingers across his desk. Her fingernails are bloody and torn away in places, in a clear visual nod to the now-iconic scene of Sadako crawling through the television set in *Ring*. (Figures 4.3 and 4.4) Likewise, her murderous infant, blue-skinned and stalking, bears a strong resemblance to a key character in *Ju-on*. Allusions to these key horror texts appear occasionally in the Korean ghost film as ironically knowing, as, for example, in the opening scene in *The Ghost* (Kim Tae-kyung, 2004), which depicts a séance conducted by some teenage girls. Whilst playing with a ouija board, the door to the room opens and a figure is outlined against a cascade of bright light. As two of the girls scuttle around the ouija board to hide behind their friend, the camera cuts back to the spectral intruder, a girl, dressed in white, with her long dark hair obscuring her face. In a series of shot-reverse shots, we see the figure slowly advancing upon the increasingly terrified girls, until she finally steps into the light and is revealed to be the sister of one of the girls conducting the séance. She laughs and pulls a face, releasing the tension of the scene. The iconography of the genre is here mined to ironic and comic effect.



Figure 4.3: The ghost's damaged hand in *Arang*



Figure 4.4: Sadako's hands in *Ring*

South Korean supernatural horror films exist in a global cultural market, and as such are influenced by, and impact upon, films from beyond the national border. Over the past few decades the formerly dominant model of national

cinemas has been challenged by an increased awareness of cinema as a transnational medium. As Lim and Higbee explain, film history has shown that transnational flows and connections are not a new phenomena, and the shift towards the transnational in scholarship can be viewed as expressing a dissatisfaction with 'the paradigm of the national as a means of understanding production, consumption and representation of cultural identity(...) in an increasingly interconnected, multicultural and polycentric world'.⁷⁰ The influence of Japanese horror upon South Korean horror cinema is emblematic of this transnational flow, but also stands as a microcosm of a wider cultural dialogue. As previously discussed, Japanese colonial doctrine, in its final phases, sought a near-total supplantation of local currency with its Japanese alternative. Although ultimately unsuccessful, it would be foolish to believe that all traces of this process were erased by the liberation of the peninsula. *Arang*, which revives a Korean folk story, yet is permeated by the influence of Japanese cinema, stands in for the ways in which the Japanese tampering with Korea's historical records has impacted that nation's access to its own history. Both acts are haunted by the trace of Japanese involvement.⁷¹

Shamanism is another key element of Korean folk belief visible in a selection of contemporary ghost films.⁷² The position of shamanism within Korean society has frequently been contested and controversial, alternating between viewed as something contemporary society ought to be ashamed of and a valorised repository of traditional Korean cultures, vacillations which have been dictated by the wider political climate.⁷³ One of the key tenets of shamanism is that "all misfortunes and sorrows suffered by a human being are caused by angry gods or the souls of dead people', and therefore shamanic rituals were conducted in order to pacify these spirits.⁷⁴ In the previous chapter I

discussed the ways in which *Spirit's Homecoming* positioned shamanism as a method through which the sentiment of *han* may be purged, portraying in its final scene a ritual in which the ghost of a dead comfort woman was settled. While the shaman is a figure closely associated with the ghost, it is not this role that I am concerned with here. Rather than discuss the narrative function that shamanic characters perform across a variety of films, I wish to highlight how their presence, echoing that of the ghost, demonstrates a fracturing of a concept of modernity that has erased its temporal antecedents. By depicting shamans as operating within the modern world, these films insist upon the coevalness of pre-modern belief and modern identity. This can be read as a critique of the colonialist mentality discussed previously, which established a hierarchy over non-modern cultures couched in the language of temporality, by illustrating that modernity is permeated by non-modern patterns of thought. The tensions between the structures of modernity and shamanism came to the fore in 2016 during the scandal that eventually led to the downfall of President Park Geun-hye. One report highlighted the fact that what had riled up much of the populace was not the question of undue influence or possible corruption, but that the ties between the head of state and a family with shamanic associations was a 'shameful throwback' to a pre-modern world.⁷⁵ The presence of shamanism in Korean cinema and culture points to a present still unable to escape its own past.

Shamanism is one of the elements at play in *Bunshinsaba* and *Whispering Corridors*, films which focus upon high schools as an ever-fruitful source of terror. In her examination of the Korean film industry, Jinhee Choi constructs her analysis around different genres, but tellingly focuses upon *Whispering Corridors* in a chapter not concerning the horror film but teen

movies.⁷⁶ As with many teen movies, these films are concerned not only with the interpersonal relationships amongst the adolescent characters, but also with the relationships that they have with older figures, particularly parents and teachers. Thus questions of inter-generational transmission are brought to the fore. In *Whispering Corridors*, for example, this is made particularly clear by the figure of Hur Eun-young, a former pupil of the school who has recently joined the teaching staff. She acts as a bridge between the older members of the faculty and the younger students, and it is ultimately revealed that the ghost terrorising the school and posing as a current student is in fact the spirit of one of Eun-young's former classmates. That a great number of contemporary South Korean horror films take place in schools is arguably an attempt by the film industry to present compelling narratives to an adolescent audience and depict their social circumstances.⁷⁷ However, by haunting these schools with ghosts who bring previously occluded histories into the classroom, these films demonstrate a concern with what is being passed on from the older generations to the next, and perhaps more importantly, what is being buried.

Finally, in this brief discussion of some of the key themes within contemporary South Korean supernatural horror films, I wish to discuss the prevalence of haunted modern technologies. In his analysis of the reception surrounding *Ring*, Matt Hills discusses the film alongside other Japanese horror films such as *Suicide Circle* (Shion Sono, 2002) and *Kairo* (Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001) as demonstrating the cataclysmic effect that technology can have upon the people of Japan.⁷⁸ One could quite easily transpose this reading to films such as *Arang*, *Phone* (Ahn Byeong-ki, 2002) and *Killer Toon* (Kim Yong-gun, 2013) in the Korean context, as each presents a form of technology, haunted by a spirit which leads to loss of life. I, however, am more inclined to apply a

liberatory quality to these films' representations of new media. Although these technologies are mediums through which the ghosts of the past are able to haunt the present, they are also the avenue through which their buried secrets are ultimately uncovered. In *Phone*, it is by tracing the clues revealed by the haunted device that the protagonist is able to reveal the events that lead to the death of the girl haunting the narrative. These new technologies thus emerge as a way in which counter-discourses, or previously buried secrets, can be transmitted and made public. Cinema also plays a role in this respect. In *Epitaph* we are told that ghosts can only be seen when viewed in a mirror, yet the cinematic camera is able to see spectres throughout that film, even when characters within the diegesis cannot. Likewise, in *Arang*, during a scene in which a character films a wedding party, the spirit of Min-jeong is invisible except through the viewfinder of the video camera. (Figure 4.5) By its very nature, the cinematic apparatus emulates a haunting through its reanimation of an historical moment. By allowing us to see ghosts, its status as a window into the past is amplified. The darkened hall of the cinema becomes the site of a séance, and through the play of shadows on a screen, the spirits of the past can commune with us once more.



Figure 4.5: The ghost viewed through the filmic apparatus in *Arang*

Seeing Through Ghosts

This chapter has examined a number of contemporary South Korean supernatural horror films in order to demonstrate the ways in which our present is permeated by the experiences of the past. In looking first at a pair of films set during Korea's experience of Japanese colonialism, I demonstrated how both *Epitaph* and *The Silenced* presented a critique of the lack of memorialisation of the colonial period. The presence of ghosts as figures who disrupt linear temporality within these narratives raises questions about the persistence of historical traumas and the absences within official historical records. By chasing spectral traces within *Epitaph*, seemingly unrelated historical events are placed into dialogue with each other, revealing previously overlooked connections and ramifications. Thus, the aftershocks from a small explosion on a Hawaiian island are revealed to have toppled an empire and liberated a peninsula. In place of a singular historical narrative of cause and effect, these silent phantoms open up a cacophony of historical perspectives.

Through *The Doll Master* and *The Red Shoes* I demonstrated how ghosts provided a way of filling in the cracks of a national history passed down ancestrally. These films allegorise a present haunted by the crimes of the colonial era, in which the failure to find justice or memorialisation has created a time possessed by the spirits of these failures. These two films however are indicative of a wider concern within South Korean cinema over the ways in which the past still comes to bear on the present. Bliss Cua Lim describes ghost films as historical allegories which ‘make incongruous use of the vocabulary of the supernatural to articulate historical injustice’.⁷⁹ In the four films mentioned here, this historical injustice is related to Korea’s experience of Japanese colonialism. However, the ways in which phantoms open up the past to scrutiny ensures that while a revenant might speak to some specific historical referent, the questions it poses are not so easily contained. I have shown how the presence of ghosts and shamanic characters points to the co-existence of different temporalities within a culture, and that the pre-modern is best conceived of a non-modern, contemporary companion to modernity, rather than a facet that is overwritten by it. In this instance, the past, or the pre-, is more than a precursor, but a force that exists alongside and within the present. Ghost films illustrate the resilience of these beliefs, accompanied by the persistence of historic gender roles, showing that the present is not as isolated as we might wish to believe.

Hauntings reveal that there are elements of our pasts that remain unsettled, that have not been properly put to rest. The frequent recourse to locating these hauntings within schools echoes the questions raised in *The Doll Master* regarding the information about the past that is *not* passed down to future generations. I closed by suggesting that new technologies may play a

role in bringing this information to light, and it is to the resurrection and settling of ghosts that I wish to turn in my final chapter. Although these latter issues do not directly invoke the colonial period, this historical moment is but one of many that they resurrect. The revenant breaks down temporal boundaries, allowing us to question the present from the perspective of the past, and making that past come alive again. Alongside more traditionally historical films, South Korean supernatural films have displayed a remarkable insistence on resurrecting the traumas of the national past. Ultimately, while each drawing on different and specific historical instances from which to source their narratives, each of the films analysed in this chapter, and in the broader thesis, is concerned with the ways in which the past lives on and influences the present. In the case of the South Korean ghost film at least, 'the past is never dead. It isn't even past'.⁸⁰

Chapter 5

It Follows You Like a Ghost

Memory is one of the avenues through which the past wanders into our present. Whilst a memory might be consciously mobilized in order to allow us to experience our history once more, memories can also act as violent temporal insurgents, appearing unbidden and striking with piercing flashes of recollection. This thesis has been concerned with the ways in which the cinematic image might recall the past, through representation, allusion and spectres. In this final chapter I continue with my examination of contemporary South Korean ghost films, exploring how these phantoms gesture towards the death of memory and point the way to its resurrection. I use these films, with their focus on the aftermath of a traumatic event, as allegorical texts concerned with the ways in which an incomplete memorialisation of history impacts upon the present day. They stand therefore not as interrogations of Korea's colonial past but of the nation's present, and the way in which the legion of public and personal traumas endured by its citizens have not found redress. I start by providing examples of how contemporary South Korean cinema has depicted amnesiac characters, highlighting how these texts foreground investigation and force their audiences to realise that key facts relating to the filmic world have been kept secret from them. The films under consideration intersect through their linkage of traumatic revelation to three key themes; culpability of their protagonists, the medicalisation of treatment, and familial relationships. I continue by illustrating how, above and beyond their stylistic traits, these films share thematic links to the Gothic mode. Drawing upon scholarship concerning

the Gothic, this chapter demonstrates how these films allegorise a wider Gothic turn in contemporary South Korean culture, as national commissions have demanded that younger generations answer for ancestral wrongdoings. The failure of the nation to adequately address the legacy of collaboration, a theme which has loomed over much of this thesis is, in this chapter, finally addressed. Although an attempt to place this contentious issue directly on screen has finally occurred, in Choi Dong-hoon's *Assassination*, my analysis argues that through allegorical readings we can see this topic as having been alluded to across a selection of contemporary South Korean supernatural films.

The thread that ties together the films under discussion in this chapter is the trope of traumatic amnesia. With occasional references to other texts, the main focus of this analysis will be upon *The Ghost* (also released under the title *Dead Friend*, Kim Tae-kyeong, 2004), *Bestseller* (Lee Jeong-ho, 2010) and *A Tale of Two Sisters* (Kim Jee-woon, 2003). Each of these three films features a female protagonist who has endured a moment of such intensity that it has fractured their individual chronology, placing their own history at an unreachable distance. In the latter two films, the very fact that something has been forgotten has also been repressed, as neither character is aware of quite how damaged their experiences have left them. The presence of this schism in the characters' memories is brought to light by the appearance of a ghost, an unsettling presence which suggests that the stability of the present is barely concealing a volatile, turbulent past. In bringing this past to light, and reconciling the traumatic event into the realm of the protagonists' consciously accessible memory, these films depict the process of treating traumatic disorders.

Whilst not specifically delimiting my analysis along generic boundaries, the supernatural texts with which this chapter engages could all be considered

as belonging to the horror genre, although as I will discuss shortly, an analysis of the specific gothic characteristics utilised by these filmmakers proves to be more revealing than a consideration of these texts as specifically 'horror' films. However, in looking towards contemporary South Korean horror cinema to reveal concerns that relate to the historical and cultural moments of their production I am following on from the work of Adam Lowenstein and Linnie Blake, who have both, separately, argued for the position of horror cinema as a medium through which questions of national identity and moments of historical trauma are able to come to the fore.¹ But why is it that horror cinema in particular has allowed for a cultural analysis centred upon such questions? Blake describes horror as the 'most traumatic and traumatised of film genres', one which is 'trauma-raddled and wound-obsessed'.² Horror narratives explore trauma by 'remembering it and repeating it', depicting the disruption caused to the existing societal framework and individual identity by a traumatic incident, and concluding with the re-formation of these constructs within a post-traumatic context.³ Drawing upon the work of Walter Benjamin, Lowenstein develops his conception of the allegorical moment as a 'collision of film, spectator and history where registers of bodily space and historical time are disrupted, confronted and intertwined'.⁴ Benjamin's *Jetztzeit*, 'time filled by the presence of the now' is a 'risky, momentary collision between past and present', 'an image of the past' that 'sparks a flash of unexpected recognition in the present'.⁵ These sparks of recognition are the cracks through which history seeps into a narrative. Meaning, rather than being a fixed or inscribed element, thus emerges in a dialectical moment between images, at the site of this spark. Importantly it is not that the past emerges to cast light upon the present, or that the present is utilised to illuminate the past, rather that 'what has been comes together in a

flash with the now to form a constellation'.⁶ The allegorical moment is, in Lowenstein's distinction, a way of challenging the binary constructions that often dominate analyses of texts that confront history or trauma, allowing for a negotiation of meaning beyond labels such as historically accurate/inaccurate or a healthy/unhealthy representation of trauma.⁷

In the context of this chapter, my interest in this allegorical moment is twofold. Firstly, I am interested, like Lowenstein, in the ways in which the spark of historical recognition allows a film text to 'speak otherwise' through allegory on the subject of historical trauma.⁸ However, I am also interested in the ways in which this process has been narrativised within a number of recent South Korean horror films. 'The image of the past' of which Benjamin writes appears in these films as artefacts that both tie to a traumatic recollection and act as clues to the secrets which the narratives conceal. Once these films have reached their dénouements and revealed their traumatic mysteries, the audience is able to piece together the significance of these triggers, rearranging the chronology of the narrative with the benefit of hindsight. By evoking the figure of the ghost, these films exhibit instances of spectral time, as discussed in the previous chapter. Benjamin's *Jetztzeit* and Lowenstein's allegorical moment can be compared to the hauntological moment, a trio of overlapping theories which speak to the collision of different times, in an interaction from which neither period emerges untouched.

Forgetting, Investigating, Remembering

The complications that arise from a character losing their connection to their own past are far from a novelty in cinematic narratives. Writing in the *British Medical Journal*, Sallie Baxendale discusses a range of films which engage with

amnesia, dating from 1915 to the present day, and emerging from a variety of national cinemas.⁹ 'Although clinically rare, profound amnesia is a common cinematic device', she declares, and argues that these cinematic representations are frequently at odds with how this symptom is currently understood from a medical viewpoint.¹⁰ This perhaps unsurprising assertion, that filmmakers prioritise the function of a narrative device over medical accuracy, highlights that what is of significance in these texts is not the quotidian features of living with amnesia, but instead the actions of forgetting and, importantly, regaining individual memories. An interesting feature of Baxendale's survey of the cinematic landscape is the predominance of narratives in which amnesia is both brought on, and often reversed, by a blow to the head. In the context of the Korean films being discussed in this chapter, however, it is striking how these amnesiac states do not stem from neurological issues, but instead are entirely psychiatric complications. By removing physical or organic factors as etiological to the fugue states experienced by the characters, the filmmakers have located the obstructions to remembering purely in the psychological realm, and in doing so make the traumatic response an object of enquiry.

In its first chapter, this thesis explored the ways in which traumatic events posed a challenge to traditional practices of representing and relating to the past. Whereas that chapter was concerned with a wider systemic response to trauma, one that was removed from its initial stressor by a significant time period and emerged at a collective, rather than individual, level, in this chapter we return to a more traditional understanding of trauma, in which an individual reacts to events which they experienced directly in their own lifetime.

Dissociative amnesia is one of the symptoms included in the diagnostic criteria

for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in DSM-V.¹¹ The relationship between trauma and memory is, however, more nuanced than a simple absence of recollections relating to the traumatic incident. Other key symptoms of PTSD are classified as intrusion symptoms (for example, nightmares and flashbacks), in which memories of the event, which may not be consciously accessible, impinge upon the daily life of the sufferer. Trauma can thus exist in a terrifying dual state as something which stems from the past yet cannot be accessed or contextualised within an individual's own biography, but which can emerge unbidden into the present with disastrous psychological impact. One approach to the treatment of such disorders therefore is an attempt to re-temporalise and contextualise the original traumatic event, locating the event in a realisable and consciously accessible past, and in doing so ensuring that it may no longer seep into the subconscious present. In the context of the films under discussion in this chapter, I argue that not only do they depict the individual experience of trauma (and attempt to recreate the subjective experience of trauma, to greater and lesser success, through cinematic devices) but through their narratives of historical investigation and discovery, they narrativise the healing process and in doing so, allegorically point to a wider national project that was being undertaken around the times of their production.

Although I am primarily concerned in this chapter with the way in which traumatic amnesia speaks to a particular relationship to history in general, rather than a connection to any one specific historical moment, it is worth briefly acknowledging that contemporary South Korean cinema has elsewhere depicted amnesia in relation to the colonial period. The final of the three tales told in *Epitaph* (a film which was discussed extensively in the previous chapter) concerns Dr. Kim Dong-won, a doctor left grieving following the sudden violent

death of his wife, In-yeong. At the close of Dong-won's story, it is ultimately revealed that it was Dong-won, rather than In-yeong who died, a fact that has shattered In-yeong's psyche. She lives her life alternating between the identity of her deceased husband and her own, and is guilty of the murders which exist on the periphery of each of *Epitaph*'s stories. In-yeong's schizophrenic reaction to a traumatic incident serves as an exaggerated microcosm of the identity conflict at play within colonial subjects. The interplay between Korean and Japanese subject positions that stemmed from Japan's assimilationist colonial policies is here symbolised by a psychological disorder. The breaking down of identity which I discussed at the close of chapter two, in which characters are shown to transition across the borders of specific subjectivities is here taken to a pathological extreme. In-yeong's trauma results from the actions of a Japanese general, and she enacts her revenge by murdering Japanese soldiers. Her trauma, and her response to it, are heavily grounded in the circumstances of the colonial period. Although *Epitaph*, as I have shown previously, endlessly rewards deeper analysis, I wish to stem my discussion of this film here in order to turn to a selection of films that, although less contextually grounded in the experience of Japanese occupation, are of significant value to my overall point of enquiry, the relationship between contemporary cinema and the colonial past.

Across *The Ghost*, *Bestseller*, and *A Tale of Two Sisters*, the revelations of forgotten histories provide shocking moments to which the films have been building. The presence of spectres - and other inexplicable occurrences - shatters the pre-existing equilibrium of these cinematic worlds, setting forth narratives of investigation and discovery as the protagonists seek to unearth the secrets to which these spectres gesture. Each of these three films is structured

around a narrative of discovery, in which the actions of the main characters slowly bring them closer and closer to the revelation of their repressed memories. Although the films are united in their depiction of amnesiac characters, each text discloses this fact to its audience in a different fashion. Early on in *The Ghost* we are introduced to the protagonist Min Ji-won, and are explicitly told that she is suffering from a form of amnesia. Initially unconcerned by her situation, Ji-won is preparing to move abroad and is content to treat her missing memories like 'an umbrella she left on a bus'. However, following the bizarre deaths of two girls with whom she was close friends before she lost her memory, and a series of increasingly fantastical and violent nightmares, Ji-won becomes convinced that her missing memories hold the key to the horrific events surrounding her. Slowly clues are revealed to Ji-won and to the audience, particularly relating to water, and a large scar that Ji-won bears on her forearm. Her investigations provide triggers which allow Ji-won to eventually recall what happened to cause both her scar and her amnesia. She was part of a group of four friends who used to abuse one of the school's poorer girls, Soo-in. On a trip to the mountains the four friends bring Soo-in along to carry their bags and take photographs. Ji-won spitefully pushes Soo-in into a lake, and is then pushed in by her friends. Ji-won is unable to swim, and while thrashing about in the water manages to force Soo-in under, causing her to become trapped on the lake-bed and ultimately drown. It is while wrenching her arm from the clutches of the drowning Soo-in that Ji-won developed her scar. She escapes to the bank of the lake, where she collapses and is exhorted by one of her friends to not remember the incident, to take it to her grave. This instruction from her friends is an audio element which recurs throughout the film's soundscape. Upon recovering her memories, Ji-won dives into the lake to

discover the body of Soo-in, remarkably preserved despite the passage of time. Her body is recovered in an act that Ji-won believes will settle her vengeful ghost.

Unlike in *The Ghost*, which foregrounds Ji-won's amnesia, *Bestseller* is not forthcoming about the unreliable status of the protagonist through whom we experience the narrative until approximately halfway through the film. Baek Hee-soo is a writer who retreats with her daughter to a villa in a rural fishing village in an attempt to restart her career following a plagiarism scandal. Whilst staying in the villa, Yeon-hee (Hee-soo's daughter) is shown having conversations with an invisible spectral presence. This spectre is that of Choi Soo-jin, a local girl who went missing over twenty years prior. Through Yeon-hee, Hee-soo learns Soo-jin's story, and she uses it as the basis of her latest novel. When this later tale is also revealed to have plagiarised an existing work, Hee-soo suffers a psychological breakdown. Her therapist and her ex-husband have little sympathy for her claims that she had heard the tale through her daughter, and through these two men Hee-soo is forced to confront the shocking revelation that her daughter had, in fact, died two years previous to her stay in the Bates Villa. Yeon-hee was the victim of a tragic accident during the initial plagiarism scandal, having been left unattended by Hee-soo. The film replays a number of previously shown scenes involving Hee-soo interacting with her daughter, this time from the perspective of a third character. (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) As the audience relives these scenes from a new vantage point, we realise that Hee-soo had always been alone in the house. The audience discovers this shocking fact at the same moment that Hee-soo is forced to confront that she has repressed this memory. As this realisation hits, the body of the film itself becomes affected: the camera begins to shake and move

unpredictably, panning, tilting and zooming erratically as it attempts to inscribe Hee-soo's psychology upon the film. The remainder of the film follows Hee-soo as she attempts to piece together the circumstances of Soo-jin's disappearance, and in doing so she brings the guilty parties, and the murdered girl's corpse, to light.



Figure 5.1: Hee-soo and Yeon-hee at the villa in *Bestseller*



Figure 5.2: The audience sees that Hee-soo has been hallucinating the presence of Yeon-hee. (from *Bestseller*)

Finally, in this triumvirate of damaged female protagonists is Bae Soo-mi, the lead in Kim Jee-woon's *A Tale of Two Sisters*. The audience's initial understanding of her psychological condition exists halfway between the two lead characters discussed above, as we know from the film's opening scenes that something has happened to Soo-mi and that she is being released after a period of hospitalisation, but we are unsure as to the precise nature of her symptoms or their cause. The unreliability of the figure through whom we experience the film forces the audience to piece together many of the text's elements themselves, attempting to unravel the mystery of Soo-mi's past as she struggles to deal with the confusion of her present. After multiple horrific incidents, we discover that Soo-mi's psyche has shattered following the suicide of their mother and the ensuing accidental death of her sister. Since her release from the hospital, she has been hallucinating the presence of both her dead sister and her absent step-mother, the latter of whose identity she has been adopting for phases throughout the film. A key element of Soo-mi's trauma stems from the fact that she was in a position to save her sister's life, but became distracted by her feud with her step-mother.

Each of these films has approached the traumatic revelation from a different perspective. *The Ghost* revolves around Ji-won's endeavours to understand how the horrific events surrounding her relate to her amnesiac state. In *Bestseller*, Hee-soo is not consciously aware that she has suffered a trauma, and as such, its revelation midway through the film is a shock to both character and audience. *A Tale of Two Sisters* charts an interesting midpoint between these two positions: although the audience is aware that all is clearly not well in Soo-mi's world, the eventual revelation of her trauma still has the ability to shock and sadden. Despite the fact that these films chose to expose

their narrative secrets in different ways, their engagement with the process of traumatisation shares three interestingly consistent traits. The first of these features is that the repressed memories which these films recover ultimately indict the protagonists with a degree of culpability for the trauma that they have experienced. These individuals have repressed not only their experience of a traumatic incident, but also their involvement in these same deaths. Ji-won's bullying of Soo-in caused her to drown. Hee-soo's neglect of Yeon-hee allowed for her to die in the accident. Although Soo-mi did not cause the circumstances that led to her sister's death, had she acted when given the chance her sister would probably have survived. To this list one could quite easily add *Acacia* (Park Ki-hyeong, 2003) (in which Mi-sook remembers that she killed her adopted son, and with her husband buried him in the back garden), *Epitaph* (Kim In-yeong realises that she is responsible for the serial murder of Japanese soldiers) or *The Red Shoes* (where Sun-jae, likewise, discovers that she is responsible for the murders that have occurred during the film). Discussions of trauma have had a tendency to focus, understandably, upon the victims of atrocities. These examples however broaden the remit of an analysis of traumatic consequence, bringing the experiences of perpetrators, and those in the clouded middle-ground, to the fore. In the depictions of trauma presented across these films, elements of guilt have seeped into the individual's understanding of the traumatic incident, compounding it, and causing it to become inaccessible to their conscious identities.

Following my previous assertion that these texts show an exclusive interest in traumatic amnesia as a psychological, rather than neurological, condition, it is perhaps unsurprising that mental health care plays a significant role in each of these films. In *The Ghost*, we see Ji-won in a consultation with

her physician, following a series of medical tests. The physician states that no neurological explanation can be found for her condition, and as Ji-won is leaving the country, he simply suggests that her memories may return, over time. One of Ji-won's friends who was present during the death of Soo-in is also shown to be undergoing treatment, having had a breakdown upon learning of the death of the rest of the friendship group. She has been institutionalised, and is seen to be terrified of a 'water demon'. Psychiatric institutions play a role in *Bestseller*, as Hee-soo undergoes treatment following her realisation that her daughter has died, and in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, in which Soo-mi both begins and ends the film confined to the institution, unable to adequately process the deaths of her sister and mother. Each of these films pitch medical science against an individuated psychological response to trauma, and in each instance, the former is found wanting. This is most clearly evident in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, where Soo-mi is released from the institution, unprepared and ill-equipped to deal with her post-traumatic world, causing her to become dangerous. As the film progresses, it becomes increasingly clear to the audience and the characters that surround her that Soo-mi has not recovered from the ordeal which originally necessitated her stay in the psychiatric facility. In marked contrast to the institutionalised treatment regime alluded to in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, both *The Ghost* and *Bestseller* depict their protagonists essentially curing their traumatic amnesia through their own actions. Their investigations lead to them uncovering the repressed events of their past and therefore allowing them to re-integrate these incidents into their conscious memories. Whereas these latter two films end on a note of (perhaps conditional) optimism, allowing their lead figures to progress with their lives, *A Tale of Two Sisters* depicts a girl who is repeatedly unable to consciously

address what has happened to her. Across these films a message emerges that the only way to truly overcome the traumas of the past is to directly confront one's own history, and in doing so transpose personal history from traumatic memory into conscious recollection.

The final dynamic at play within these three films to which I wish to turn my attention is that of the family, and in particular the way in which these films present fractured family dynamics as constituent aspects of their trauma. This is evoked fairly simply in *Bestseller* by the depiction of Hee-soo as separated from her husband, and with her trauma stemming from the death of her daughter. *A Tale of Two Sisters* greatly confuses its familial relations by refracting our experiences of them through the shattered lens of Soo-mi's fragile and shifting sense of identity. When piecing the narrative together, with the benefit of the knowledge provided by the film's closing revelations, we understand that Soo-mi has been acting as three separate characters: herself, her sister, and her step-mother. Only her father has actually been with her in the house throughout the film (with the exception of a brief visit from her step-uncle and aunt), and he does not confront Soo-mi with the truth about her sister until she has passed too far into her psychosis to be easily recoverable. The traumatic incident at the heart of the film is therefore not only something that is repressed by Soo-mi, but also serves as a secret concealed by her father.

The familial relationships at play within *The Ghost* are wholly transformed and corrupted by the influence of the past, here made flesh through the force of ghostly possession. Having discovered the corpse of Soo-in, and in doing so recovered her memories of her traumatic experience, Ji-won returns home to her mother. However, it is suddenly and dramatically revealed that Ji-won has not lain the ghost which has been haunting her to rest just yet. In a role reversal

of spectral possession, we come to understand that Ji-won's body has in fact been under occupation from Soo-in's spirit this whole time, and that it is Ji-won's own vengeful ghost that has been enacting the hauntings of the text, in an attempt to punish her erstwhile friends and regain her former body. Ji-won's spirit has now possessed the body of her own mother, who then attacks Soo-in, currently residing in the body of Ji-won. Although Soo-in/Ji-won escapes this attack, the final scene of the film, in which we see Soo-in's mother looking menacingly towards the camera, suggests that Ji-won's spirit has moved on to this new target and is determined to try to regain her former form. Both maternal figures (here the sole parent following the deaths of the fathers), are revealed not to be who we believed them to be. In the previous chapter I discussed the generational transmission of knowledge as a form of history, a way in which we gain access to personal, private histories, that intersect with (and occasionally contradict) official, public historical narratives. In each of these three films, this generational transmission is placed in jeopardy, either by the premature death of a relative, or through an ancestral figure not being who we believed them to be, having kept secrets from their children.

The three areas of interest which I have revealed at work within *The Ghost*, *Bestseller* and *A Tale of Two Sisters* are thus an investigation into the circumstances of a traumatic incident, treatment for this trauma coming from a revelation of these circumstances, and the ways in which this trauma impacts the generational transmission of knowledge about a culture's history. I will turn to the allegorical significance of these textual elements shortly, but first I wish to introduce another framework through which to examine these texts. Made relevant by the reliance of these films upon spectres as arbiters of history, a consideration of the Gothic elements at work within these films will serve to

emphasise the ways in which they serve as allegories, as well as how they speak to the occlusions of the historical record.

Korean Gothic

The Gothic is, as David Punter explains in the introduction to his two-volume study of Gothic literature, not a simple term to define. Initially referring to a group of novels with shared characteristics, written between the 1760s and the 1820s, the term has blossomed to encompass a wide variety of cultural productions, as well as being used to refer to specific architectural and artistic styles.¹² Existing somewhere between the romance and the novel, this phase of the Gothic has been described as a transitional form, often looked down upon in critical circles, and seen as a stepping stone to the more lauded Romantics who superseded it.¹³ The medieval period loomed large in these early texts, whose narratives abound with castles, abbeys, churches and graveyards, populated by spectres, skeletons, monks and evil aristocrats.¹⁴ The prevalence of stock figures as a defining characteristic of Gothic narratives leads Maggie Kilgour to claim that ‘the Gothic seems hardly a unified narrative at all, but a series of framed conventions’, the analysis of which ‘often devolves into a cataloguing of stock characters and devices which are simply recycled from one text to the next’.¹⁵ The impact of these initial Gothic works has been significant enough to ensure that many of the semantic and syntactic features which defined this brief generic flowering have found themselves repeated across a variety of texts that do not fit within the parameters of this understanding of the Gothic genre. In my use of the concept, therefore, I follow Peter Hutchings’ argument that it is more fruitful to consider the Gothic as a specific mode of cultural production, rather than as a more restrictively circumscribed genre, and a term that overlaps with,

although is certainly not equivalent to, the horror genre.¹⁶ Fred Botting argues that 'changing features, emphases and meanings disclose Gothic writing as a mode that exceeds genre and categories, restricted neither to a literary school nor a historic period'.¹⁷

Adding to the diffuse nature of the Gothic is the way in which it has been transformed by the passage of time and the global transmission of its influences, leading to a 'diffusion of Gothic traces across a multiplicity of different genres and media', as well as across different ages and cultures.¹⁸ While the Gothic of the eighteenth century was concerned with the medieval period as its frame of reference, in the nineteenth century this was expanded into the contemporary period with texts that addressed the darker potential of the advances of the enlightenment. Scientists conducting unearthly experiments became a recurrent theme, this time unleashing their horrors into the modern city rather than temporally and geographically distant castles. Likewise, as creators from different national backgrounds have adopted the Gothic into the language of their work, different cultural concerns have been brought into dialogue with the form's particularly Eurocentric tendencies. In a chapter on 'Asian Gothic', Katarzyna Ancunta proposes a multi-faceted approach to analysing the localisation of the Gothic, foregrounding elements of local cultural identity and the interconnectedness of regional cultures, whilst also viewing texts with a mindfulness of the paradigms of the Gothic derived from a study of Western cultural products.¹⁹ Of particular relevance here is her discussion of the vengeful female Asian spirit, which although exhibiting different regional characteristics 'are relatively easy to inscribe into Gothic narratives' due to the tendency of their stories to relate to madness, murder, rape and suicide.²⁰ While I am mindful of the argument that the supernatural and the everyday are not as

separated in many Asian cultures as they are in those from which the frameworks of the Gothic originate, a situation ensuring that 'not every ghost in Asia must necessarily speak of repression or past trauma', my analysis must be led by the texts themselves. In focussing on films in which spectral apparitions occur within the scope of narratives engaged with trauma and memory, ultimately these ghosts act within the roles generally ascribed to them by Gothic texts, namely the revelation of past wrongs.

One of the key factors in the continued cultural significance of the Gothic is the way in which the mode has been wholeheartedly embraced by the cinema. Christopher Frayling has claimed that Gothic cinema 'propelled a long-marginalised and sometimes subversive form of literature from the past into the wider cultural bloodstream'.²¹ The association makes sense when considering that 'there is, in fact, something peculiarly visual about the Gothic.'²² The fusion of the Gothic and cinema has resulted in a particular set of visual codes which leap to mind when one thinks of the Gothic, what Kava refers to as the language, or sign system, of the Gothic Film.²³ Cinema's silent era featured a number of adaptations of canonical Gothic texts, such as *Frankenstein* (J. Searle Dawley, 1910), *Dracula* (as *Nosferatu*, F.W. Murnau, 1922) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (Carl Laemmle, 1925), but it is with the coming of sound, and Universal Studios' cycle of Gothic monster movies (which ran from the 1931 release of Tod Browning's *Dracula* until the 1950s, when science fiction elements supplanted their Gothic characteristics) that the dark union between cinema and the Gothic was firmly established. Botting locates Gothic cinema in the 'non-literary, cultural tradition that remains the true locus of the Gothic.'²⁴ Within the Korean cinematic context, the Gothic has been invoked by commentators as a way of engaging with a diverse range of texts, from the

supernatural horror films of director Ahn Byeong-ki,²⁵ the psychological horror of *A Tale of Two Sisters*,²⁶ and the 'lesbian revenge thriller' *The Handmaiden* (Park Chan-wook, 2016).²⁷ What these critics have picked up upon, in concord with the framework discussed above, is not merely a translation of western Gothic stylistic characteristics into a more locally specific form, such as the ghosts who point to historical crimes adopting the appearance of the *cheonyeo gwishin* or the replacement of crumbling castles with more regionally appropriate architecture, but that these features operate alongside a summoning of the thematic elements that have come to define Gothic narratives.

What is the benefit of referring to the Gothic, a mode with quintessentially European overtones, within the context of my analysis of contemporary Korean cinema? I suggest that the Gothic is of relevance in the context of this thesis as it is, alongside its many stylistic characteristics, a cultural form singularly obsessed with the relevance of the actions of the past to the day-to-day life of the present. It is a form that is saturated down to its reanimated bones with the consequences of historical wrongdoings. In previous chapters I have discussed the historical film as a form which very consciously and directly engages with a specific national historical record. Seeking to move beyond comparatively simple processes of representation, through both the song *Arirang* and the figure of the ghost I have explored the ways in which history can be made present on screen in other, less immediately tangible ways. This final chapter poses the Gothic as an alternative approach from which to deal with haunted texts. In place of the deconstructionist efforts of hauntology, which ultimately speaks to a dissolution of our conceptions of linear, homogenous temporality, the Gothic presents a model in which the endurance of the past into the

presence speaks not to a corruption of temporality, but of geography and societal structures. Places have become haunted, and familial lines are disturbed by the revelations of historical crimes. Despite what Botting refers to as the 'heavy historical trappings' of the Gothic, 'Gothic narratives never escaped the concerns of their own times'.²⁸ It is this element of allegorical allusion that ensures these Gothic texts, like the historical films discussed in the first two chapters of this thesis, do not engage with history from some point external to it, but do so in a way that reflects the concerns of the times of their production.

The Ghost, Bestseller and *A Tale of Two Sisters* share a number of thematic concerns that have long been utilised by those working in the Gothic mode, chief among them the mode's dominant theme, the impact of an unacknowledged historical event upon the present. The Gothic has frequently been obsessed with the return of the past, both in the Freudian sense of the 'return of the repressed', but also in a textual sense through the evocation of historical periods, outmoded world views and social structures, and crumbling architecture. Although these three films all have a contemporary setting, they are still concerned with the return of an obscured past, albeit one at a distance of years, not generations. The continued impact of the past upon the characters of these films is made palpable by the ways in which the texts invoke this past through two apparently contradictory facets, presence and absence. The obscured past is made present most vividly through the spectacle of the spectre, and in true Gothic fashion it is the appearance of the ghost that disrupts the narrative equilibrium and reveals that there are historic events at play that have yet to be suitably addressed. Whilst a presence, in that they have agency within the diegesis of the narrative, the ghost is an absence, in that it

lacks physical, corporeal form, that also highlights an absence, that of the person, now dead, in the world of the present. Thus, the force that drives the characters in *Bestseller* and *The Ghost* is the intent to make the absence present once more, by uncovering the corpse and the cause of its demise, finally setting the ghost to rest. It is this process that concludes the narrative of *Bestseller*, with the absent presence of the ghost of Soo-jin finally being confined to the past, something the murdered girl was attempting to achieve by recounting her tale to the authors who visited the villa. This feature of the haunted text has become such a generic characteristic that *The Ghost* (and, perhaps most famously, Hideo Nakata's *Ring*) have subverted it to provide shocking finales, in which it is discovered that even the revelation of past injustices will not lay a tormented spirit to rest.

Whilst the spirit embodies the model of history's presence being expressed through an absence, this characteristic is also made explicit across these three films via the amnesia from which all three protagonists suffer. In this case, the void in their individual memory becomes indicative of a historic trauma, a psychologically internalised indexicality. In each of the three films explored in this chapter the traumatic event is alluded to not only by both of these absent presences, but also by the depiction of physical artefacts, each granted a particular significance by their respective films, which are symbolic of the moment of trauma. In *The Ghost*, this artefact is the scar upon Ji-won's arm, simultaneously a physical indicator of a past event, and a rather heavy-handed metaphor for the incomplete healing process through which she is going. For Hee-soo, the protagonist of *Bestseller*, it is the wooden boat with which her daughter plays in the bathtub that appears as a symbol of her unacknowledged past. Hee-soo asks Yeon-hee why she likes playing with the boat so much, to

which she replies that it is because she bought it for her, something that Hee-soo could not remember. When she finally acknowledges the fact of her daughter's death, the audience discover that it was whilst trying to use a hairdryer to propel this boat that she was electrocuted. The evocative item is more closely tied to the presence of the spectre in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, in that it is the vibrant green dress that the ghost wears that is revealed to have a historic resonance. In the film's finale, we see Soo-mi's sister, Soo-yeon, discover their mother's corpse in a closet. Their mother has hung herself, with this same shimmering emerald dress hanging next to her. For the audiences of these films, these objects serve a narrative function akin to the clues discovered by protagonists of detective thrillers. Once we have discovered the circumstances of the traumatic events that have occurred to shatter the lives of these characters, the significance of these items to those events becomes apparent. Whilst these artefacts do not lead the characters directly to their moments of revelation, they serve for both themselves and the audience as physical remnants of trauma in a present in which all other traces have been erased.

In discussing a group of Gothic novelists (William Godwin, C. R. Maturin and James Hogg) David Punter highlights three characteristics that exemplified their utilisation of the Gothic form, which precisely illuminate the textual elements that I wish to reveal in these south Korean films through a consideration of their Gothic characteristics.²⁹ The first of these is what he terms a 'shift towards the psychological', describing the novels in question as 'psychological investigations'.³⁰ The three films discussed in this chapter each attempt, to greater or lesser extent, to engage the audience in the psychology of their traumatised characters. A Gothic archetype with which these films

engage is the figure of the protagonist as a woman shown to be tottering at the brink of madness, beset by terror and paranoia. Rather than view these women from a position of objective sanity, the audience is only permitted entry into these films' narrative world through the damaged perspectives of their leading women. Thus, our knowledge of their history is subject to the same ellipses and occlusions with which they themselves wrestle, and moments of revelation come to shock the audience at the same moment as the characters whom we are watching. In the first half of *Bestseller*, we watch Hee-soo interact with her daughter Yeong-hee, oblivious as she is to the fact that her daughter had died years before. The fact that the cinematic image does not differentiate in its depiction of Yeong-hee compared to the other, living, characters in the film's narrative betrays the fact that we are witnessing the events of the film through the filter of Hee-soo's psyche. At the moment halfway through the film, in which Hee-soo confronts the fact that she has repressed the memory of her daughter's death, flashbacks interfere with the contemporary image. At moments, images and sound become separated, allowing each to become disjointed from its temporal pair. This becomes a potent evocation of the traumatic flashback, as the scene demonstrates the way in which the past can return unbidden, and in a way in which makes distinguishing separate temporalities exceptionally complicated.

A similar process is at work in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, which likewise presents its narrative through the distorting colouration of its protagonist's perspective. As in *Bestseller*, absent characters are believed by the audience to be present due to the mediation of Soo-mi's psychology upon the filmic form. This is taken to greater extremes in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, however, with the externalisation of character psychology onto the realm of the film's *mise-en-*

scène becoming a visual motif. Jinhee Choi, in her analysis of the film, discusses the fracturing of the physical space as echoing the psychology of the characters, and the ways in which characters blend into the *mise-en-scène* of the environment serving as if one was merely an extension of the other.³¹ The presentation of physical space within the film heightens this sense of a psychological dimension at work within the construction of the film's cinematography. The apparently deliberate reluctance of Kim Jee-woon to completely contextualise the geographical space that Soo-mi finds herself trapped within, through establishing shots and the like, serves to disorientate the spectator, heightening the psychological uncertainty that permeates the film. Indeed, in slightly contorting and occluding the environment of the film, the house becomes even more evocative of that most iconic of Gothic interiors, the castle. Coupled with the ornateness of the décor, *A Tale of Two Sisters* becomes emblematic of the excess that Botting defines as the Gothic's signifying characteristic.³² In this instance, a heightened *mise-en-scène*, stylised beyond the realms of realism, complements the psychological excess portrayed in the film, in which horror and trauma overwhelm the protagonist in the same way that stylistic excess overwhelms the screen.

The uncertainty of the physical space in *A Tale of Two Sisters* is reflective of Punter's second characteristic of Gothic texts, the increasing complexity of verification.³³ In the context of Punter's analysis, he is referring to an increasing disconnect between the fictional world of the narratives and any semblance of realism. Elsewhere, however, he discusses how the Gothic might be required to represent the 'real' world in an 'inverted form', as the taboo nature of its subjects might place them beyond the normal processes of representation.³⁴ For an individual, the excess of negative affect that is

associated with the experience of a traumatic incident is believed to overwhelm traditional structures of memory and representation, hence the experience being coded as traumatic. To the extent that excess and negative affect are likewise characteristics of the Gothic, I would suggest, using *The Ghost, Bestseller* and *A Tale of Two Sisters* as demonstrative examples, that the Gothic can be an abundantly fruitful form through which to engage with representations of trauma. The emphasis upon poetic and visually arresting elements in the Gothic is designed to 'produce emotional effects on its readers rather than developing a rational or properly cultivated response'.³⁵ By inciting a powerful emotional response, the Gothic has the potential power to connect with the individuated, emotional response to a traumatic incident, as opposed to a conscious, rationalised one. In Chapter one of this thesis I explored a similar process relating to the treatment of trauma, following the work undertaken by William Sargent. I argued that his efforts to treat trauma through the use of hypnosis and strong emotional triggers (utilising an approach that prioritised the construction of an emotional response in his patients above the creation of factually accurate recreations of their trauma), had parallels with the repetition of traumatic incidents in fiction films. Following Punter, the Gothic mode would appear to be a perfect form for filmmakers to pursue this approach, given his suggestion that the Gothic can essentially provide a shortcut to an audience members emotional responses, bypassing their critical faculties.

Related to this disconnect between the world of the Gothic and the world of the real is the unreliability of our central narrator. An aspect of many seminal Gothic texts, from stories such as *Ligeia*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe, to Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, an unreliable narrator makes 'a division between reality and the imaginary difficult to

achieve'.³⁶ The central protagonists of *The Ghost*, *Bestseller* and *A Tale of Two Sisters* are all revealed to be unreliable in retrospect, a fact that ensures our first experience of their narratives is a destabilising experience. *The Ghost* is particularly perverse in this respect, in that it informs us early on that the character through whose point of view the narrative unfolds is suffering with amnesia, and is therefore not wholly reliable, only for the film to reveal in its closing act that Ji-won has been possessed by a different character this whole time. The unreliability of the narratives presented to the audiences of these films stems from unreliability in the memory processes of their central figures. When viewed in conjecture with that other key Gothic theme, the occlusions of the historical record, the uncertainty of narration can be seen to stand in for the wider unreliability of the historical record.

The final of Punter's triumvirate of Gothic characteristics is the depiction of persecution, particularly from the perspective of the persecuted.³⁷ The question of the justness, or otherwise, of persecution is a theme I shall focus upon in the next section, but of interest here is Punter's question as to whether the characters are as persecuted as they make out to be. His suggestion is that this paranoia is another thread which runs through Gothic texts. Evidently a facet of the trope of the unreliable narrator already mentioned, in the films discussed in this chapter the sense of paranoia is tied to feelings of unaddressed guilt. Perhaps most clearly evoked in *A Tale of Two Sisters*, Soo-mi spends the majority of the film convinced that she and her sister are being persecuted by her step-mother. The revelation that neither of these other two characters has actually been present in the house within the timeframe of the film's narrative places the entirety of the paranoiac delusion within the confines of Soo-mi's psychology. By positioning her sister as a victim of her step-mother,

Soo-mi's role in her sister's death is repressed. It is only when the circumstances of the traumatic event and the extent of Soo-mi's delusions are revealed to the audience that the nature of her paranoia is exposed.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that it is through an adoption of Gothic traits that a strand of contemporary South Korean cinema has placed a character's repressed past and their fractured present in dialogue with each other. But where is the critical value in equating these narratives with the Gothic? Across *The Ghost*, *Bestseller* and *A Tale of Two Sisters*, I see the preponderance of Gothic characteristics as allegorising a decidedly Gothic shift in contemporary South Korean political culture. These films inscribe political contexts in their depiction of the personal. In *The Castle of Otranto*, regarded as the first of the Gothic novels, the author Horace Walpole, who presents the text as a found artefact, describes the moral of his own story as that "the sins of fathers are visited on their children to the third and fourth generation".³⁸ The Gothic depicts the threat to familial lines by the crossing of temporal boundaries as 'an ancestor's crime threatens a family's status' and an 'old misdeed tarnishes parental respectability'.³⁹ It is what Punter calls 'perhaps the most prevalent theme in Gothic fiction: the revisiting of the sins of the fathers upon their children'.⁴⁰ This Gothic theme was made legislative reality in South Korea as part of a movement that has become known as 'Settling the Past' (*gwageo cheongsan*), one of the ways in which South Korean politics has formally sought to address the traumas of the nation's twentieth century.

Settling the Past

In the post-democratisation era, the South Korean political establishment has demonstrated a repeated reliance upon 'truth commissions' as a way of officially

engaging with the nation's traumatic and divisive history. Although the exact parameters of truth commissions may vary substantially between different national contexts, Priscilla Hayner provides a useful definition of them as 'bodies set up to investigate a past history of violations of human rights in a particular country – which can include violations by the military or other government forces or by armed opposition forces'.⁴¹ While Hayner's study charts examples from as far back as 1974, interest in truth councils has increased since commissions from El Salvador (Commission on the Truth for El Salvador, reporting in 1993) and South Africa (Truth and Reconciliation Commission, formed in 1995) gained international prominence.⁴² South Korea's own engagement with truth councils can be traced back as far as 1948, to the formation of the First Republic. The first National Assembly established the 'Special Committee to Investigate Anti-Nation Activities'; however, 'with little support from the Syngman Rhee government, the committee became moribund within a year and was officially disbanded in January 1951'.⁴³ Whilst some attribute this collapse to collusion between Rhee and pro-Japanese collaborators, Young Jo Lee (the President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission) suggests that the necessities of forming a strong and viable state superseded any desire to prosecute collaborators.⁴⁴ A later attempt to address historical atrocities, this time following the fall of Rhee's regime in 1960, was similarly quelled by political pressure.⁴⁵

This lack of an effective national decolonisation process, a situation which allowed the actions of those who collaborated with the Japanese to go unpunished in the post-liberation era, has been addressed by contemporary South Korean cinema. In the 1949-set coda to *Assassination* (Choi Dong-hoon, 2015) a character who had betrayed the resistance fighters that the film

valorises, Yem Sek-jin, stands trial before the aforementioned special committee. Due to lack of evidence he is released without charge. As Yem leaves the court he walks through a protest against the national crimes committee, the film's soundtrack filled with chants urging the court put aside the past for the sake of national unity. However, Choi's film attempts to rectify this historical misstep by staging its own form of retroactive justice. Yem is lured down a side street by the survivors of the independence group that he betrayed, and is executed. Like the modern truth commissions, *Assassination* returns to the past to seek justice that was denied at the time.

The multiple truth commissions which have been instigated since the coming of civilian democracy to South Korea have directed their attentions to various phases of the nation's modern history. Alongside those that have addressed Korea's subjugation at the hands of Japanese colonialism, there have been investigations of massacres committed by both sides of the ideological divide during the chaos of the Korean War (1950-3), as well as of atrocities which occurred during the years of military dictatorships in South Korea between liberation and democratisation (1945 – 1987). In interrogating incidents which in some cases date back to as many as one hundred years ago, South Korean truth commissions are peculiar in the way in which they have pursued 'historical justice', irrespective of the passage of time, as opposed to the transitional justice which characterises many truth councils, in which a new political regime seeks to prosecute the sins of its predecessor.⁴⁶ Although the Kim Young-sam (February 1993 - February 1998) and Kim Dae-jung (February 1998 - February 2003) administrations both used the power of the legislature to attempt to come to terms with the nation's history, to greater or lesser extents, it is with the Roh Moo-hyun administration (February 2003 -

February 2008) that government commissions became a substantial aspect of the political establishment's efforts to engage with the traumas of the national past.⁴⁷ Lee discusses the formation of eleven commissions within the Roh administration, of which the remit of four concerns issues of the colonial period, as well as of separate truth commissions initiated within a number of government agencies.⁴⁸ It was also in this period that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was formed. Operating alongside these other commissions which each dealt with specific incidents, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had a far broader remit, covering a duration 'from the period of Japanese rule to the present time', and was even directed to investigate 'positive' aspects of the nation's past, such as actions by Korean resistance fighters and overseas Koreans during the Japanese occupation.⁴⁹

What function do these truth commissions serve? Or alternately, as Sheila Miyoshi Jager asks, 'why the attempt to revisit this past on the living, few of whom lived through the colonial period?'.⁵⁰ Andrew Wolman describes the particular importance of the councils in the Korean context as the way in which they seek to 'attain some form of restorative justice in traditionally non-litigious society, and have particular resonance in a country where Confucian norms ensure the continuing relevance of individuals' reputations, even many years after their deaths'.⁵¹ The focus of these commissions has been principally upon the victims, upon revealing the truth of their victimisation, and upon achieving the rehabilitation of their reputations.⁵² Thus, they have rarely punished or recommended punishment for perpetrators, and in many cases, have kept the names of offenders concealed.⁵³ The formal, state sanctioned nature of these truth commissions ensures that their findings became part of the nation's historical record. As a result, while their conclusions may not be particularly

revelatory, their recognition of the veracity of certain events, which have been alleged and denied for decades, incorporates these events into South Korea's official narrative. A clear parallel can be drawn here between the integration of occluded histories into the national record and the treatment of individual traumatic experience: both revolve around the integration of contentious historical memories into a more open, accessible form of historical recording, be that public records or individual memory. Indeed, the use of *settling* as the operative verb in the 'settling the past' movement highlights the therapeutic nature of the endeavour. The films discussed in this chapter allegorise this process by depicting the treatment of an individuated response to historical trauma, namely amnesia, which stands for gaps in the national historical record.

Although prosecution and restitution have not been the primary goals of the truth councils, their findings have had ramifications which bear significantly Gothic overtones. Couching his language in terms that would be familiar to readers of Walpole, in 2004 President Roh announced the launch of a campaign to investigate Korean collaborationist activities by saying that the nation was still 'unable to rid [itself] of the historical aberration that the families of those who fought for the independence of the nation were destined to face impoverishment for three generations, while the families of those who sided with imperial Japan have enjoyed success for three generations'.⁵⁴ In an effort to address this perceived legacy of injustice, the Investigative Commission on Pro-Japanese Collaborators' Property was launched in September 2006, tasked with investigating collaboration during the colonial period and seizing the profits of these unethical enterprises.⁵⁵ As a result, 11.13 million square metres of land has been transferred to government ownership from 168 children of pro-Japanese collaborators.⁵⁶ The intention is to use this property, and its

associated value, to compensate independence fighters and their descendants, as well as on projects to commemorate the independence movement.⁵⁷ The eternal Gothic theme of the sins of the father being revisited upon the son has in South Korea, in the past decade, become a matter of public policy. In place of the ghost, risen to enact vengeance and address the wrongs of its history, truth commissions have arisen to address obfuscations of the historical record, coupling investigation with witness testimony with the aim of bringing ancestral sins to light.

In discussing *The Ghost*, *Bestseller* and *A Tale of Two Sisters*, I demonstrated how each of the films depicts investigations into the root of a trauma that had been repressed by the leading characters, and how the revelation of these traumas points the way to a recovery from the amnesia they suffer. I argue that these films allegorise a wider cultural movement, characterised by the term ‘settling the past’, through their presentations of investigations into historical abuses as a way of confronting contemporary horrors. Whilst the retribution enacted by truth councils upon the descendants of collaborators does have parallels within South Korean cinema (see, for example, the curse depicted in *Bunshinsaba*, which sees the spirit of a murdered woman return 30 years later to enact her revenge upon the village that persecuted her and her daughter), the return of the past depicted by these three films, although not as historically distanced, points to the familial nature of the crimes alleged by these truth commissions. Each of the films is structured around a repressed incident which has shattered the relationship between parent and child. The tragedy at the heart of *A Tale of Two Sisters* ultimately stems from Su-mi’s father’s illicit relationship with his wife’s nurse. His actions cause his wife to commit suicide, and inadvertently lead to the death of his

youngest daughter. The extent to which the older daughter's relationship with her father feeds into her traumatised response to this tragedy is made explicit by the way in which Soo-mi internalises the identity of her stepmother, even going so far as to argue with herself over which roles are appropriate to each position that she unknowingly adopts. *Bestseller* has a much clearer depiction of the shattering of the parental relationship, showing how Hee-soo's neglect causes the death of her daughter. She is too busy attempting to refute the growing scandal resulting from her plagiarism to adequately watch out for her daughter. The consequences of this initial transgression, the film therefore shows, magnify due to Hee-soo's failure to address her past actions, and it is ultimately her daughter who must suffer as a result. Both of these texts construct a direct causal relationship between the crimes of a parent figure and the suffering experienced by their children.

In marked contrast to this simple approach is the complex and repeated focus that *The Ghost* draws to maternal relationships. Throughout the film, Ji-won is shown to have a fractious relationship with her mother, exacerbated by her imminent relocation abroad. It is in the film's finale, once Ji-won has decided that she will stay in Korea and attempts to reconcile with her mother, that this relationship is utterly transformed. Ji-won's mother is revealed to have been possessed by Ji-won's spirit. A disturbing secret is uncovered and the audience discovers that Ji-won's mother is, quite literally, not who we thought she was. In the film's final frames, we are led to believe that Ji-won's spirit has returned once more and taken possession of the body of Soo-in's mother, reaffirming the text's depiction of the parental figure as the conduit through which the traumas of the past impinge upon the present.

The three films which I have discussed in this chapter are all concerned with the processes of historical revelation, but can certainly be read as being ambivalent as to the benefit that such acts can have. Although the recovery of traumatic memories is shown to have therapeutic effects, they do not come without great personal cost. Historical trauma is granted an identity through the presence of the ghost, and the vengeance which this spirit enacts is one form of representation of the damage that the unearthing of historical trauma can cause. The spectre's death toll becomes a clear metaphor for punitive historical justice. Less obvious however is the way in which these films have achieved similar effect through their use of guilt as a constituent aspect of their traumatic representations. In seeking to recover the lost fragments of their memories, each of the three protagonists has been forced to confront their culpability in their own trauma. These films speak to the ways in which individuals may be forced to confront crimes that they were unaware of due to the revelations of historical investigation. In conjunction with state efforts to interrogate the nation's past, there has been a growth in civil organisations undertaking similar endeavours. One such organisation is the Institute for Research into Collaborationist activities, which in 2005 published what it terms an encyclopaedia, listing the names of over three-thousand Japanese collaborators.⁵⁸ This implies that alongside the comparatively small number of families which have experienced the confiscation of their property due to the actions of their ancestors, there are a far greater amount that have found their names tarnished by the stain of newly-revealed collaboration. In tying their traumas to the functioning of the family unit, rather than apportioning blame for the horrors of the past at the foot of a corrupt other, *The Ghost*, *Bestseller* and

A Tale of Two Sisters force an audience to acknowledge that guilty parties may be far closer to home.

An Unsettled Past

In *A Tale of Two Sisters*, as Soo-mi's constructed reality starts to disintegrate, two sides of her post-traumatic identity talk to each other. As Soo-mi lies on the floor, beaten and bloody, the step-mother role in her psyche towers over her. Rather than the horror that currently surrounds her, she lectures herself, what's 'really scary' is a person's inability to forget. The past 'cannot go away', 'it follows you like a ghost', Soo-mi tells herself. While the post-traumatic experiences of the protagonists discussed in this chapter all differ, they are each tied to the specificities of the originary traumatic moment. By depicting a wide variety of ways in which echoes of this past trauma are experienced in the present, contemporary South Korean filmmakers have attempted to convey the subjective, individuated and horrifying nature of post-traumatic suffering. I have argued that in adopting such an approach, these filmmakers have not only sought to address the processes of traumatic memory, but have also allegorically spoken to the ways in which traumatic pasts were being resurrected at the moments of their productions. The investigative actions which drive the narratives of these texts link into a wider national cultural movement which has come to be described as 'settling the past', in which agents from a number of different spheres sought to address previously repressed historical acts and challenge their lingering injustices. Taking into account the psychological dimension of trauma presented by these films, the project to 'settle' and address troubled aspects of the nation's history should be viewed as an act of national therapy.

What links these films is the presence of the spectral figure as the crack through which the previously repressed past is able to seep into the present. In order to complement their insistent focus on the psychology of trauma, and in particular the lingering, insidious influence of the past upon the present, I have argued that these films have invoked the spectre of the Gothic in both their form and content. By doing so, these films have not only highlighted their own concerns by alluding to a far wider body of cultural production, but have also thrown into stark relief the extent to which the South Korean legislature has itself utilised Gothic terminology and actions in order to confront the sins of the past. By persecuting individuals for the alleged crimes of their ancestors, the South Korean state has made an evergreen Gothic theme - the sins of the parent being revisited upon the child - into an element of national policy. I have read these three films as contributing to this national mood, by showing how they depict past traumas as disrupting familial relationships and the potential for the generational transmission of historical knowledge, as well as demonstrating how digging around in the past might unearth uncomfortable secrets. In order for individuals, and their societies to progress, these films suggest, it is vital that they are able to look back and address the traumas of their pasts. This is by no means a painless process, and may well involve the uncovering of things one would wish remain buried. Although my interest in this thesis has been the legacy of the colonial period, the truth councils in South Korea, and indeed the wider cultural interest in unearthing the nation's past, have been concerned with addressing a wide range of previously suppressed historical incidents. By bringing the Gothic into conversation with a group of culturally grounded texts, and relating them to a specific historical context, I provide an example of how

the Gothic may address the peculiar challenges posed to the processes of representation by trauma.

The argument presented above considers these texts as part of an argument for a more productive relationship between a society and its multiple temporalities. Much of my discussion has explored how filmmakers have addressed the past and have sought to reveal some of its previously concealed secrets. However, both hauntology and the Gothic are frameworks which allow for the collision of multiple temporalities, concerning themselves with much more than simply the past. Contemporary gothic narratives depict a present which is permeated by the past, and in doing so deconstruct a chronological notion of temporality in which the past is washed away by the present. By invoking multiple, coeval temporalities, haunted narratives destabilise the present. Yet the greater value of a spectral approach, one could argue, is the potential it holds for us to transform our futures. In the previous chapter I briefly evoked the future anterior in respect to hauntology and *Epitaph*. This is the utopian potential of the hauntological approach, it 'does not take up the past as *it was*, but conjures *other* pasts in order to imagine a different, better future'.⁵⁹ To 'live with ghosts' as Derrida phrases it, is to 'live otherwise...not better, but more justly'. This would create 'a politics of memory, of inheritance and of generations',⁶⁰ a better future, with greater temporal awareness, in which we are freed from the traumatic hold that the past has on us. This is perhaps best conveyed by the ending of *Bestseller*. Following her exposure of the circumstances of Soo-jin's murder through her spectral encounter, Hee-soo agrees the confess to the plagiarism she had been accused of. She decides that she wants to 'write that story again, in an entirely different way'. This sequence of events demonstrates an opening up of temporalities and

perspectives, one which allows for Hee-soo to address her past, and perhaps find reconciliation with her ex-husband. The ending of the film leaves many of these potential actions unresolved, allowing for the audience to imagine multiple futures for Hee-soo. The spectral presents an opportunity for the past, the future and a range of coeval temporalities to engage with, and impact upon, each other.

Across the films discussed in the past two chapters, ghosts return from the dead to revisit the living, bearing a message. They speak from a past that is less distant than we might believe, and in doing so highlight the ways in which collective memory may occlude incidents that ought not be forgotten. If we do not come to terms with the traumas of our pasts, their presence suggests, these pasts will not rest, and will follow us like a ghost.

Conclusion

Perspectives on the Colonial Period

This thesis has explored the multiple ways in which contemporary South Korean filmmakers have sought to engage with their nation's colonial history. Adopting a number of theoretical approaches, I have shown how the films in question have addressed the topics of trauma, identity, modernity and temporality in relation to South Korea's status as a formerly colonised nation. Each of the critical approaches discussed in this thesis share a common concern with the influence of the past upon the present. By exploring contemporary South Korean cinema through these different theoretical perspectives, I have demonstrated how the impact of the nation's colonial legacy can be traced in multiple and varied ways.

In chapter one of this thesis I explored how many contemporary films have depicted Korea's colonial past from a nationalist perspective, emphasising the traumatic aspects of this historical era. By valorising figures from the Joseon dynasty, a royal line aborted by Japanese intervention, and civilian figures fighting for Korean resistance, these films have presented national, nationalist heroes, and placed them in conflict with villainous Japanese characters. This chapter engaged primarily with trauma as its theoretical framework. Expanding beyond the conceptualisations of how trauma is believed to function at the individual level, I discussed how certain events could come to have such wide-ranging significance that they come to be perceived as 'cultural traumas' or 'limit events'. My key engagement with trauma theory in this chapter is that it points to how the processes of representing the past may become inhibited by trauma, and therefore suggests that we may need to look to less obvious moments to

reveal the traces of history at play within a text. In this respect, I looked at how films such as *The Fighter in the Wind* and *Private Eye* can be read as addressing a subject such as the comfort women issue in an indirect, suggestive fashion, rather than through direct representation.

The second chapter of this thesis moves away from a perspective that sees the colonial period as wholly negative and traumatic, arguing that filmmakers have been drawn to the period for more than nationalistic reasons. Drawing upon the concept of colonial modernity, I discussed how contemporary films have engaged with the appeal and attraction of modernity in order to create stories in which colonial subjects were active agents in their own destinies, rather than merely helpless victims. Through the depiction of characters for whom Korean nationalism is not the defining facet of their identity, filmmakers have allowed space for a broader consideration of the colonial period, one which is not overwhelmed by the question of national sovereignty. Freed from these formerly dominant nationalist perspectives, the films are able to engage with the complexities and nuances that would have impacted the daily lives of the colonised subjects. In particular, contemporary films have engaged with the assimilationist rhetoric of Japanese colonial policy and have challenged the boundaries between Japanese/Koreans and the coloniser/colonised. Instead of a binary demarcation along racial lines, in which the Japanese are villainous colonisers and the Koreans are helpless victims, the absurdity of such essentialist positions is revealed. As a result, the role that Koreans played in the subjugation of their fellow citizens is highlighted, alongside the ways in which colonial subjects mediated their identities in order to ensure their survival.

From chapter three onwards, this thesis increasingly turned away from exploring direct representations of the colonial period towards an examination of texts which chose more circuitous approaches to engaging with this history. I introduced the Korean concept of *han*, a term with no real equivalent in English, as a way of expanding this thesis' understanding of how a culture can react to aspects of the past that are invested with negative connotations. *Han* provides a kindred perspective to trauma, allowing for my analysis to consider my key theme, the legacy of the past upon the present, from a wider perspective which may have greater resonance given the cultural context of the films I discuss. Key to the understanding of *han* expressed in this chapter is the way in which the sentiment expresses an accumulation of sorrowful events. Subsequent traumas compound those that they proceed, creating connections between the experiences of the present and the suffering of a national past. I have demonstrated how the folk song Arirang became, over the course of the twentieth century, an iconic expression of the sentiment of *han*. Contemporary filmmakers, as well as cultural and state level agencies from both Korean states, have drawn upon Arirang and its connections to a sense of Korean national identity in order to enhance the layers of meaning contained within their own work. By linking their struggles to Arirang and *han*, they place their films in dialogue with a tradition that stretches back at least as far as the colonisation of Korea, and in doing so bring history into dialogue with the present. I am acutely aware that there is the potential for a concept with the cultural resonance and specificity of *han* to be used in such a way by outsiders to this culture so as to appear totalising or reductive. In order to avoid such an approach, I limited my analysis in this chapter to films which either within their diegesis, in their promotional material, or through their use of Arirang, directly engage with the

concept of *han*. Ultimately *han* is a perspective that allows for a more nuanced understanding of certain Korean cultural products, providing a different, but complimentary framework to trauma theory.

In chapter four I invoked the spectral turn in critical theory as a way to address the interconnectedness of the past and the present. The concept of hauntology, established by Jacques Derrida in *Spectres of Marx*, appears in this chapter alongside a more contextually grounded approach to spectres as presented in the work of Renée L. Bergland and Bliss Cua Lim. The ghost speaks to an unsettled past, and its return erases any notion of the independence of temporalities. An analysis of spectral returns, like a consideration of trauma, allows us to interrogate the relationship between the past and the present. Looking at the colonial-set ghost story *Epitaph*, I traced the historical allusions present in the film to illustrate how such references bring multiple temporalities into dialogue with each other, revealing previously unconsidered connections and occluded histories. As well as revealing overlooked elements of the past, the spectre breaks down temporal demarcations, insisting upon the simultaneous existence of multiple temporalities. Resurrecting my discussions of modernity, the ghost disrupts the concept of linear progression that underpinned theories of modernisation, insisting upon the continued existence of unsurmounted 'pre-modern' traditions, instead presenting the coeval coexistence of heterogenous temporalities.

In the final chapter of this thesis I demonstrated how a further selection of haunted narratives have used amnesiac protagonists and drawn upon the Gothic mode as a way of allegorising the 'settling the past' movement that was in full force at the time of their production, a movement that made Gothic themes a legislative policy. As well as concerning itself with a preponderance of

spirits, the Gothic is a form that is inescapably concerned with the impact of a repressed past upon present figures and the revelation of historic traumas. The enquiries conducted by truth councils into the nation's historical experiences are paralleled by films in which characters uncover facts about their own history that they had unknowingly repressed. These characters have found themselves haunted in the present, and the films suggest that the only way to settle their ghosts is to allow these repressed memories to be integrated into conscious recollection. While these films are primarily concerned with the impact of the past upon the present, such narratives contain a message about how to improve and create better possible futures. The only way to come to terms with individual historical traumas, the films suggest, is to address them and reintegrate them into the individual's conscious memory. The political implication here is clear, that for the nation to progress in a way that is not inhibited by the traumas of its past, these wounds must be fully addressed and allowed to heal.

My central thesis is that contemporary filmmakers have approached Korea's colonial experience as a topic that has not been adequately addressed by contemporary society. Their representations of the past not only serve to bring it back to life for a modern audience, but also speak to the connectedness of these two temporalities. I have shown how engaging with a traumatic past, and attempting to consciously come to terms with it, is the fundamental step in lessening the incident's impact upon the present and in doing so opens up the possibility of more utopian futures. Films that directly address the traumatic aspects of colonisation create a space that allows for an audience to have an emotional response to this trauma, safely mediated by the films themselves, with cathartic results. In this respect, they are exemplary of the clinical process

of treating trauma, as it is currently understood. By challenging the perspective of this era as being a solely negative experience for the colonised citizens, and challenging the boundaries that tie Koreans to victimhood and the Japanese to aggression, cinema has complicated the quick association of colonisation with trauma. Culture provides a medium through which an individual can express their feelings of *han*, and in doing so lessen them. Ghost films demonstrate that the horrors of the past cannot be simply ignored or forgotten; traumas that go unaddressed will return ceaselessly to haunt later time-periods. Only an interrogation of the past, the bringing of its buried secrets to light, will allow us to free ourselves of the past's hold on us. Cinema provides an opportunity to remember, to discuss, and to heal the traumas of our past.

Through the findings discussed above, my research has contributed to the existing literature on South Korean cinema in a number of ways. I have expanded the scope of the discussion surrounding films set in the colonial period, particularly in relation to the ways in which they challenge preceding nationalist paradigms. I have shown how many of these films present an increasingly nuanced engagement with the national past, and in doing so raise the issue of how many Koreans themselves became agents of colonial subjugation. My research also introduces key elements from the field of trauma theory into the analysis of South Korean cinema. I utilise the terminology of trauma, alongside the local concept of *han*, to propose a new framework to understand how contemporary filmmakers are using the medium of the fiction film to address specific moments in the nation's troubled past. Finally, this thesis presents a model of how concepts such as spectrality and the Gothic may be used to highlight the multiple temporalities at play within a text. A greater awareness of how these different temporalities may be inscribed upon

such a text, at either the narrative or the stylistic levels, presents an opportunity for us to bring previously occluded historical traces to light. I have demonstrated how South Korean supernatural films can be read as speaking allegorically to Korea's experience of Japanese colonialism, but this approach has merit and applicability beyond studies of either this specific national or temporal context.

The scope of a doctoral thesis, and the time period over which it is conducted, ensures that there is only space to discuss a limited number of texts within the body of the work. Since writing the substance of the previous chapters and conducting final revisions, there have been a number of films concerned with the colonial period released in South Korea. I am reassured of the validity of the arguments expressed in this thesis by the ways in which these recent films have echoed and reinforced the perspectives I have explored here. The continued valorisation of historical figures from the Korean resistance is evident in the existence of a film such as *Anarchist from Colony* (Lee Joon-ik, 2017), a sympathetic retelling of the story of Park Yeol, an anarchist who plotted to assassinate then-Prince Hirohito.¹ *Man of Will* (Lee Won-tae, 2017) reflects the primacy of Kim Gu in the narrative of Korean resistance to the Japanese occupation discussed in the opening chapter. This biopic focuses upon the period in Kim's life following his retaliation for the assassination of Empress Myeongseong, showing how he came to be a political leader.² Both of these films depict the brutality and villainy of Japanese figures in contrast to their heroic Korean protagonists, but in this respect are overshadowed by the scale of the atrocity depicted in *Battleship Island* (Ryoo Seung-wan, 2017). Ryoo's film presents a fictionalised narrative constructed from real historical circumstances in a story of forced labour in the final phases of the war. The film references the comfort women whilst shying away from directly depicting the

more harrowing details, but is far less reticent when it comes to presenting the horrific working conditions of the Koreans who were essentially slaves. The final armed uprising, in which the Koreans defeat their Japanese captors and are able to escape the titular island, allows for a brief moment of triumph in a film dominated by subjugation and violence.

However, as with the body of films discussed in the previous chapters, there is more to contemporary colonial-set films than narratives of trauma. Park Chan-wook's *The Handmaiden* (2016) is a luscious adaptation of Sarah Waters' novel *Fingersmith* (2002), translating its Victorian English setting into a colonial Korean context. The film has been widely acclaimed by critics, was selected to compete for the Palme d'Or at the 2016 Cannes Film Festival, and won a BAFTA for Best Film Not In The English Language in 2018. To fully explore Park's evocation of the colonial period would require an additional chapter, but I wish here to briefly highlight how its representations are permeated by the key theme of chapter two, the fluidity of colonial identity. In a narrative full of twists and duplicity, national identity is just one facet of a character's being that is shown to be highly porous. With the exception of Hideko, every major Japanese character in *The Handmaiden* is eventually revealed to be a Korean. Colonised subjects are able to assume Japanese subject positions at will, in order to further their own aims. The colonial period also lurks in the shadows of *The House of the Disappeared* (Lim Dae-woong, 2017), a haunted narrative which uses spectrality to place multiple temporalities in direct contact with each other. The haunted house at the centre of the film allows, every twenty-five years, for time to be bridged. In a striking example of the themes from this thesis' final two chapters, the protagonist Mi-hee's investigation of her own past allows her to physically act upon that past, saving her son from her abusive husband and

transporting him to a future in which his terminal illness may be cured. The number of films released recently concerning the colonial period, and the extent to which their narratives intersect with the arguments put forward by this thesis, ensures that my analysis will be of continued relevance.

Looking forwards, there will be further films released which address this period of history, either directly or the allegorical techniques I have discussed in this work's latter phases.³ Likewise, further critical work will be done, exploring my key texts alongside this later body of films. A more expansive interrogation of those texts that exist on the peripheries of this research may serve to further enforce my own findings, or may, more excitingly, present areas of dispute which raise new avenues of enquiry. Further work need not only include those films discussed within this thesis, but may also bring films from outside of the time periods or national cinema covered by this project to bear upon this discussion. In structuring my arguments, I have used the concepts of trauma, modernity, *han*, spectrality and the Gothic to interrogate the ways in which contemporary filmmakers have engaged with the national past. Each perspective has allowed for different topics to come to the fore, but these perspectives have not revealed all that there is to be said about these texts, nor have I fully exhausted their critical potential. I would encourage others to use the frameworks I have illustrated above as a way of understanding the colonial legacies present within contemporary South Korean films, and I believe that the preceding chapters demonstrate the value of such approach. However, further scholarship undertaken by those working with different theoretical approaches, who themselves have different cultural backgrounds and who emerge from different academic disciplines, can only serve to increase our understanding of this pivotal moment in Korean history.

The focus of this project has been upon the representation of one specific historical period in South Korean cinema, and I have demonstrated a variety of different approaches to address this question. However, Korea's experience of Japanese colonialism is by no means the only historical moment addressed by filmmakers in the new millennium, nor is the nation's recent history in want of dramatic or traumatic events. There is fruitful work to be done, not only in exploring different historical moments through the methods undertaken in this thesis, but also in comparing how these representations of history are determined by their specific historical contexts. In the introduction I suggested that the Gwangju massacre is an incident which would benefit from an analysis similar to that undertaken within this thesis. Judging by the phenomenal success of *A Taxi Driver*, as well as the release of *Ordinary Person* (Kim Bong-han, 2017) and *1987: When the Day Comes* (Jang Joon-hwan, 2017), both films set at the end of Chun Doo-hwan's military regime, the period of South Korea's democratisation may be the next key historical moment to captivate filmmakers and audiences alike. This is not to say that this is the only period of Korean history to warrant further analysis. As I have demonstrated, colonial narratives are still a recurring component of contemporary cinema, as are historical period dramas focusing on the pre-colonial era, as well as films addressing the ever-relevant theme of national division. A comparative study of the multiple histories inscribed within South Korean cinema would serve to highlight the ways in which popular culture is a predominant bearer of the historical record in modern societies, as well as how contested this historical record is within contemporary South Korean society.

Throughout this thesis I have sought to demonstrate that contemporary South Korean filmmakers do not work in a vacuum, their perspectives are

influenced by, and go on to influence, wider cultural discourses. As such, they do not simply reflect a national perspective but contribute to shaping it. In order to understand how the questions discussed in this thesis may evolve in future therefore, it would be incredibly short-sighted to solely consider how filmmakers and academic commentators will shape these debates. Over the past few years there have been a number of significant developments in the political sphere that, following the approach put forward by this thesis, one would expect to find influencing future South Korean filmmakers. In regards to the colonial period, the December 2015 agreement between Japan and South Korea to bring ‘final and irreversible’ resolution to the comfort women issue has proven to be deeply unpopular⁴, and although President Moon Jae-in has announced that he will not attempt to renegotiate the agreement, there is strong reason to believe that this contentious topic will impact upon Japanese-Korean relations in the years to come.⁵ Another issue likely to be of continued significance is that in 2016, following revelations of corruption, President Park Geun-hye was impeached by the National Assembly. The following March, the constitutional court upheld the impeachment and Park was formally removed from office. Criminal charges followed, and in April 2018 the former President was sentenced to 24 years in jail.⁶ The films discussed in this thesis demonstrate the extent to which contemporary South Korean filmmakers have drawn upon the culture and history of the nation in the construction of their narratives. Park’s fall from grace is such a momentous event that its fallout is likely to shape the political sphere for some time to come, and as such, we should not be surprised to hear its echoes within the nation’s cinemas.

Despite such significant events, it is possible that the most fundamental transformations the Korean peninsula has seen in generations may just be

commencing. At the time of writing, the last few weeks have seen what may turn out to be seismic shifts in the embittered relationship between the two Koreas. A joint declaration signed by President Moon and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un declares that both countries will, amongst other things, endeavour to turn the armistice into a peace treaty, carry out phased disarmament, and work towards a denuclearised Korean peninsula.⁷ It is too soon to say yet just what the ramifications of such an agreement may be, or whether such noble intentions will lead to sustained, tangible actions. However, following a year of rapidly escalating tensions between North Korea and the wider world, such a moment allows us to pause and consider the mistakes of the past. Rectifying these mistakes is far from an easy process, but in doing so we are able to imagine a brighter future, freed from their devastating legacies. The central questions of this thesis are how past traumas have impacted upon the present, and how to come to terms with these traumas in order to lessen their negative effects upon the future? These questions now fall to those who seek to create peace upon the Korean peninsula.

This project has demonstrated that our present day is inescapably permeated by the resonances of the past. From this understanding therefore flows the realisation that our own actions will echo onwards into the future, impacting upon the lives of those who follow us. The inability of South Korean society to address the traumas of the colonial period at the moment of liberation has meant that those who suffered then, and their descendants, suffer still. The examples presented in this thesis demonstrate that to ignore trauma is to ensure that it will never be healed. We must take action to confront contemporary horrors when they occur. To fail to do so is to condemn the future to be haunted by our ghosts.

Notes

Notes to Introduction

- ¹ In their introduction to the edited volume 'Theorising National Cinemas', Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen introduce two understandings of national cinema, 'as an industry and as a cluster of cultural strategies'. Both approaches apply to this thesis, as the films under discussion are produced by local companies within a domestic industry. These films also, as I will demonstrate, speak to a nationally specific context. This is in no way to argue that they 'reflect' a fully formed nation, but instead that they play a fundamental role in establishing such national identities. For more see, Valentina Vitali and Paul Willemen, *Theorising National Cinema* (London: BFI, 2006). For an introduction to the debates surrounding transnationalism in film, see Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies," *Transnational Cinemas* 1, no. 1 (2010).
- ² Korean Film Council, *Korean Film 2017*, Korean Film (Busan: Korean Film Council, 2018), 15.
- ³ Anthony Faiola, "Koizumi Stirs Anger with War Shrine Visit," *The Washington Post* (2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/08/14/AR2006081401425.html>.
- ⁴ Chehui and Kasai Peh, Teppei, "Asian Neighbours Protest as Japan Pm Sends Offering to War Dead Shrine," *Reuters* (2017), <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-ww2-anniversary-japan/asian-neighbours-protest-as-japan-pm-sends-offering-to-war-dead-shrine-idUKKCN1AV007>.
- ⁵ Samuel Guex, "The History Textbook Controversy in Japan and South Korea," *Cipango - French Journal of Japanese Studies* 19 (2012), <http://cipango.revues.org/1688>.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ Yangmo Ku, "Japanese History Textbook Controversies, 1995–2010: Transnational Activism Versus Neo-Nationalist Movement," *Pacific Focus* XXIX, no. 2 (2014): 278-9.
For more on the textbook controversy, see Claudia Schneider, "The Japanese History Textbook Controversy in East Asian Perspective," *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 617, no. 1 (2008).
- ⁸ Tae-ick Kim, "Former 'Comfort Women' Hold 1,000th Protest at Japanese Embassy," *Chosun Ilbo* (2011), http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/12/14/2011121401645.html

- ⁹ Jake Bevan, "Welcome to Panmunjeom: Encounters with the North in Contemporary South Korean Cinema," *New Cinemas* 8, no. 1 (2010).
- ¹⁰ Bruce Cumings, *Korea's Place in the Sun : A Modern History*, Updated ed. (New York ; London: Norton, 2005), 101.
- ¹¹ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, *The History of Korea* (Seoul: Korean National Commission for Unesco, 1982), 195-6.
- ¹² Dong Hoon Kim, "Eclipsed Cinemas: Colonial Modernity and Film Cultures in Korea under Japanese Colonial Rule" (University of Southern California, 2008).
- ¹³ For a dramatic account of both the Gapsin Coup and the assassination of Queen Min (Empress Myeongseong) see Fred A. McKenzie, *Korea's Fight for Freedom* (New York; Chicago; London; Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1920), 28-59.
- ¹⁴ Woo-keun Han, *The History of Korea*, ed. Grafton K. Mintz, trans. Lee Kyung-shik (Seoul: Eul-Yoo Publ. Co., 1970), 441.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Ibid., 447.
- ¹⁷ See, for example Bruce Cumings, 145., Woo-keun Han, 448. and Fred A. McKenzie, 88-94.
- ¹⁸ Takashi Hatada, *A History of Korea*, trans. Warren W. Smith and B. H. Hazard (Santa Barbara, Calif.: ABC-Clio, 1969), 108.
- ¹⁹ Ibid.
- ²⁰ Woo-keun Han, 450-1.
- ²¹ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 232.
- ²² George H. Blakeslee, "The Government of Korea," *Proceedings of the American Political Science Association* 6 (1909): 161.
- ²³ Fred A. McKenzie, 124-5.
- ²⁴ Takashi Hatada, 108.
- ²⁵ Mark Caprio, *Japanese Assimilation Policies in Colonial Korea, 1910-1945*, 1st ed., Korean Studies of the Henry M. Jackson School of International Studies (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 7.
- ²⁶ Leo T. S. Ching, *Becoming "Japanese" : Colonial Taiwan and the Politics of Identity Formation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 18-9.
- ²⁷ Mark Caprio, 10.
- ²⁸ Leo T. S. Ching, 6.
- ²⁹ Ibid., 7.
- ³⁰ David Brudnoy, "Japan's Experiment in Korea," *Monumenta Nipponica* 25, no. 1/2 (1970): 192. Emphasis in the original.
- ³¹ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, *Korea since 1850*, Topics in Asian History, Politics and International Relations (Melbourne and New York: Longman and St. Martin's Press, 1993), 50.
- ³² Woo-keun Han, 466.
- ³³ Ibid., 464-5.
- ³⁴ Takashi Hatada, 112.: David Brudnoy, 168.

- ³⁵ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 250.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Soon-Yong Pak and Keumjoong Hwang, "Assimilation and Segregation of Imperial Subjects: "Educating" the Colonised During the 1910-1945 Japanese Colonial Rule of Korea," *Paedagogica Historica* 47, no. 3 (2011): 5.
- ³⁸ David Brudnoy, 160.
- ³⁹ General William M. Royds, in Mark Caprio, 113.
- ⁴⁰ *Manse*, meaning 10,000 years has come to have a meaning more equivalent to 'Long live Korea'. *Sam'il* is the Korean for three-one, signifying March 1st.
- ⁴¹ Takashi Hatada, 114-5.
- ⁴² Woo-keun Han, 464-5.
- ⁴³ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 261.
- ⁴⁴ Korean Broadcasting System, *The History of Korea* (Seoul: Radio Korea International, 1995), 187.
- ⁴⁵ In Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 262.: Korean Broadcasting System, 187-8.: Takashi Hatada, 115.
- ⁴⁶ David Brudnoy, 169.
- ⁴⁷ Woo-keun Han, 476.
- ⁴⁸ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 265.
- ⁴⁹ Richard Devine, "Japanese Rule in Korea after the March First Uprising. Governor General Hasegawa's Recommendations," *Monumenta Nipponica* 52, no. 4 (1997): 524.
- ⁵⁰ Woo-keun Han, 479.
- ⁵¹ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 272.
- ⁵² David Brudnoy, 173.
- ⁵³ The Korean Overseas Information Service, *Handbook of Korea*, 11th ed. ([Seoul, Korea]: Korean Overseas Information Service, 2003), 106.
- ⁵⁴ Woo-keun Han, 480.
- ⁵⁵ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, 64.
- ⁵⁶ Soon-Yong Pak and Keumjoong Hwang, 10.
- ⁵⁷ W. G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford and New York: Clarendon Press and Oxford University Press, 1987), 193.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., 195.
- ⁵⁹ Mark Caprio, 3.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid., 129:46.
- ⁶¹ Woo-keun Han, 488.
- ⁶² Ibid., 495.
- ⁶³ Mark Caprio, 153.
- ⁶⁴ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, 86-7.
- ⁶⁵ Mark Caprio, 141.
- ⁶⁶ Ibid., 157.
- ⁶⁷ Ibid., 147.
- ⁶⁸ Takashi Hatada, 124.

- ⁶⁹ Mark Caprio, 158.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid., 161.
- ⁷¹ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, 87.
- ⁷² Takashi Hatada, 125.
- ⁷³ Mark Caprio, 161.
- ⁷⁴ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, 87.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 62.
- ⁷⁶ Andrew J. Grajdanzev, "Korea under Changing Orders," *Far Eastern Survey* 8, no. 25 (1939): 291.
- ⁷⁷ Hye-Kyung Chung, "The Forcible Drafting of Koreans During the Final Phase of Colonial Rule and the Formation of the Korean Community in Japan," *Korea Journal* 44, no. 4 (2004): 37.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid., 39.
- ⁷⁹ Ibid., 40.
- ⁸⁰ Bruce Cumings, 175.
- ⁸¹ Mark Caprio, 162.
- ⁸² Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, 88.
- ⁸³ Ibid.
- ⁸⁴ Brandon Palmer, "Imperial Japan's Preparations to Conscript Koreans as Soldiers, 1942-1945," *Korean Studies* 31, no. 1 (2007): 64.
- ⁸⁵ Ibid., 74.
- ⁸⁶ Ibid., 63.
- ⁸⁷ Bruce Cumings, 183.
- ⁸⁸ Edward Hallett Carr and Richard J. Evans, *What Is History?*, [2nd ed. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 24: 38.
- ⁸⁹ David Brudnoy, 156 n.4.
- ⁹⁰ See, for example Kyu Hyun Kim, "War and the Colonial Legacy in Recent South Korean Scholarship," *Newsletter of the International Institute for Asian Studies* 38 (2005).
- ⁹¹ Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Edson Robinson, *Colonial Modernity in Korea* (Cambridge (MA) & London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 2.
- ⁹² Bruce Cumings, 139.
- ⁹³ Ibid.
- ⁹⁴ Ibid.
- ⁹⁵ Pow-key Sohn, Choi-choon Kim, and Yi-sup Hong, 230-326. And Woo-keun Han, 439-509.
- ⁹⁶ Kyu Hyun Kim, 6.
- ⁹⁷ Lee Horyong, "The Current State of Studies on the Japanese Colonial Era and Related Issues - with a Special Focus on the Studies Produced in the 21st Century," *International Journal of Korean History* 10 (2006): 160.
- ⁹⁸ See, for example, Kyoung-Lae Kang's discussion of 'A Re-contemplation on Histories Before/After the National Liberation'. Kyoung-Lae Kang, "Guilt Cinema: Memory, Boundaries, and Ethical Criticism in Postcolonial Korea" (University of Rochester, 2014), 3-4.

- ⁹⁹ Many of these films were released on DVD between 200-2009 by the Korean Film Council in a series of four boxsets, bearing the title 'The Past Unearthed'.
- ¹⁰⁰ Kyoung-Lae Kang, vii.
- ¹⁰¹ Darcy Paquet, "The Korean Film Industry: 1992 to the Present," in *New Korean Cinema*, ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 36-42.
- ¹⁰² Kyung Hyun Kim, *The Remasculinization of Korean Cinema*, Asia-Pacific (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 271.
- ¹⁰³ Seung Hyun Park, "Korean Cinema after Liberation: Production, Industry and Regulatory Trends," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*, ed. Frances Gateward (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007). As Park notes however, there is still an option for the Public Performance Promotion Association, which assigns age ratings to films, to grant 'no rating' to a film they deem unsuitable for public consumption.
- ¹⁰⁴ Darcy Paquet, 44-46.
- ¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 47.
- ¹⁰⁶ Kyung Hyun Kim, 270.
- ¹⁰⁷ Ibid.
- ¹⁰⁸ Figures taken from the Korean Cinema Yearbooks, published annually by the Korean film council.
- ¹⁰⁹ Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, "Storming the Big Screen: The Shiri Syndrome," in *Seoul Searching: Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema*, ed. Frances Gateward (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 58.
- ¹¹⁰ Jinhee Choi, *The South Korean Film Renaissance : Local Hitmakers, Global Provocateurs*, Wesleyan Film (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2010), 32-34.
- ¹¹¹ Ibid., 35-8.
- ¹¹² I have written elsewhere about the importance of national division in South Korean cinema, see Jake Bevan.
- ¹¹³ Source KOBIZ
http://www.koreanfilm.or.kr/jsp/news/boxOffice_AllTime.jsp?mode=BOXOFFICE_ALLTIME (accessed 17.09.2017) Figures represent all-time box office, but records commence in 2004. The six films are *Roaring Currents* (Kim Han-min, 2014), *Ode To My Father* (Yoon Je-kyoon, 2014), *Assassination* (Choi Dong-hoon, 2015), *Masquerade* (Choi Chang-min, 2012), *A Taxi Driver* (Jang Hoon, 2017) and *The Attorney* (Yang Woo-seok, 2013). All bar the last of these would still be included in the top-ten list were it to include international releases, such has been the dominance of domestic productions.
- ¹¹⁴ Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, 58.
- ¹¹⁵ Ibid., 61.

- ¹¹⁶ Eungjun Min, Jinsook Joo, and Han Ju Kwak, *Korean Film : History, Resistance, and Democratic Imagination* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003). Hyangjin Lee, *Contemporary Korean Cinema : Identity, Culture and Politics* (Manchester: Manchester University Press,, 2000), Based on the author's thesis (Ph D): Common culture, divided nation.
- ¹¹⁷ Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer, *New Korean Cinema* (New York: New York University Press, 2005); Darcy Paquet, *New Korean Cinema : Breaking the Waves* (London: Wallflower, 2009); Frances K. Gateward, *Seoul Searching : Culture and Identity in Contemporary Korean Cinema* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); Jinhee Choi. and Andrew David Jackson and Colette Balmain, *Korean Screen Cultures : Interrogating Cinema, Tv, Music and Online Games* (Oxford ; New York: Peter Lang, 2016). (in which a version of the material contained in chapter three of this thesis appears).
- ¹¹⁸ Kathleen McHugh and Nancy Abelman, *South Korean Golden Age Melodrama : Gender, Genre, and National Cinema* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005); Alison Peirse and Daniel Martin, *Korean Horror Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013).
- ¹¹⁹ David E. James and Kyung Hyun Kim, *Im Kwon-Taek : The Making of a Korean National Cinema / Edited by David James and Kyung Hyun Kim*, Contemporary Film and Television Series (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002); Hye Seung Chung, *Kim Ki-Duk*, Contemporary Film Directors (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012). as well as a series numbering twenty-five volumes (as of September 2017) entitled Korean Film Directors, published by the Korean Film Council.
- ¹²⁰ Kyung Hyun Kim; Hye Seung Chung and David Scott Diffrient, *Movie Migrations : Transnational Genre Flows and South Korean Cinema* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2015); Kyung Hyun Kim, *Virtual Hallyu : Korean Cinema of the Global Era* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
- ¹²¹ Justin Bowyer, *The Cinema of Japan and Korea* (London: Wallflower, 2004); Kate E. Taylor-Jones, *Rising Sun, Divided Land : Japanese and South Korean Filmmakers* (London: Wallflower Press, 2013).
- ¹²² See, as indicative examples, Leon Hunt and Wing-Fai Leung, *East Asian Cinemas : Exploring Transnational Connections on Film* (2008); Vivian P. Y. Lee, *East Asian Cinemas : Regional Flows and Global Transformations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Andrew David Jackson, Michael Gibb, and Dave White, *How East Asian Films Are Reshaping National Identities : Essays on the Cinemas of China, Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong* (Lewiston, N.Y. ; Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 2006); Chris Berry, Nicola Liscutin, and Jonathan D. Mackintosh, *Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeast Asia : What a Difference a Region Makes*, Transasia: Screen Cultures (Hong Kong and London,: Hong Kong University Press ;,

- 2009); Daniel Martin, *Extreme Asia : The Rise of Cult Cinema from the Far East* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).
- ¹²³ Beng Huat Chua and Koichi Iwabuchi, *East Asian Pop Culture : Analysing the Korean Wave* (Hong Kong and London: Hong Kong University Press, 2008); Youna Kim, *The Korean Wave : Korean Media Go Global*, Internationalizing Media Studies (London ; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2013); Yasue Kuwahara, *The Korean Wave : Korean Popular Culture in Global Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Valentina Marinescu and Crystal S. Anderson, *The Global Impact of South Korean Popular Culture : Hallyu Unbound* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014).
- ¹²⁴ Moonmin Baek, "The Beautiful, the Lame, and the Weird: Three Types of Colonial Heroes in Contemporary Korean Films," *The Review of Korean Studies* 15, no. 2 (2012).
- ¹²⁵ Ibid., 15-19.
- ¹²⁶ Mark Morris, "Melodrama, Exorcism, Mimicry: Japan and the Colonial Past in the New Korean Cinema," in *Cultural Studies and Cultural Industries in Northeast Asia: What a Difference a Region Makes*, ed. Chris Berry, Nicola Liscutin, and Jonathan D. Mackintosh, Transasia: Screen Cultures (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009).
- ¹²⁷ Ibid.
- ¹²⁸ Kyung Hyun Kim, *Virtual Hallyu : Korean Cinema of the Global Era*, 55-80.
- ¹²⁹ Cynthia Childs, "Representations of a Colonial Past in Contemporary Korean Cinema," *Asian Cinema* 23, no. 1 (2012).
- ¹³⁰ Kyoung-Lae Kang, 16.
- ¹³¹ Ibid., 5.
- ¹³² Ibid.
- ¹³³ Saira Mohamed, "Of Monsters and Men: Perpetrator Trauma and Mass Atrocity," *Columbia Law Review* 115, no. 5 (2015): 1157.
- ¹³⁴ David Eldridge, *Hollywood's History Films* (London: Tauris, 2006), 5. One might question the possibly arbitrary choice of five years as a measure of a significant historical distance, but within the context of this project, in which a distance of at least fifty-five years (the time between the years 1945 and 2000) would be required for a film to qualify for analysis, the point is somewhat moot.
- ¹³⁵ Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History : Restaging the Past* (Oxford, UK: Basil Blackwell, 1980), 2.
- ¹³⁶ Robert A. Rosenstone, "History in Images/ History in Words," in *The History on Film Reader*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 37.
- ¹³⁷ Andrew Higson, "Re-Presenting the National Past: Nostalgia and Pastiche in the Heritage Film," in *British Cinema and Thatcherism: Fires Were Started*, ed. Lester Friedman (London: UCL Press, 1993).
- ¹³⁸ Belén Vidal, *Heritage Film : Nation, Genre and Representation*, Short Cuts Series (London: Wallflower, 2012), 2.

- ¹³⁹ Andrew Higson, 112.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 117.
- ¹⁴¹ Ibid., 117, 13.
- ¹⁴² Belén Vidal, 10-11.
- ¹⁴³ The use of historical anachronism is a technique that may be used to present a more critical understanding of how history and historical knowledge is constructed. See for example, Sophia Coppola's *Marie Antoinette* (2006), with its use of a pop soundtrack and contemporary props, and Rosenstone's discussion of the 'opposition or innovative historical film'. Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film Film on History*, 2nd ed., History. Concepts, Theory and Practice (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2012), 21.
- ¹⁴⁴ David Eldridge, 1.
- ¹⁴⁵ Hayden White, "Historiography and Historiophoty," in *The History on Film Reader*, ed. Marnie Hughes-Warrington (London and New York: Routledge, 2009), 53.
- ¹⁴⁶ Robert A. Rosenstone, "History in Images/ History in Words," 31, 33.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ian C. Jarvie, "Seeing through Movies," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 8, no. 4 (1978): 377-8.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 379.
- ¹⁵⁰ Robert A. Rosenstone, "History in Images/ History in Words," 35.
- ¹⁵¹ Hayden White, 54.
- ¹⁵² Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Any Resemblance to Persons Living or Dead'," *ibid.*, 17-18.
- ¹⁵³ Ibid., 28.
- ¹⁵⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵⁵ Taken from the documentary film *In The Land of Morning Calm* (Norbert Webber, 1925).
- ¹⁵⁶ Natalie Zemon Davis, 29., Ian C. Jarvie, 377.
- ¹⁵⁷ Robert A. Rosenstone, *History on Film Film on History*, 14.
- ¹⁵⁸ Hayden White, 54-5.
- ¹⁵⁹ Fredric Jameson, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism," *Social Text*, no. 15 (1986): 69. Emphasis in original
- ¹⁶⁰ Aijaz Ahmad, "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'," *ibid.*, no. 17 (1987).
- ¹⁶¹ Imre Szeman, "Who's Afraid of National Allegory? Jameson, Literary Criticism, Globalization," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 100, no. 3 (2001): 804.
- ¹⁶² Ibid., 814. Emphasis in original
- ¹⁶³ Fredric Jameson, 86-7n5. My Emphasis. This qualification allows this thesis to circumvent discussions over whether or not Korea should be considered third world, and if that term continues to have critical relevance.
- ¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 73.
- ¹⁶⁵ Susannah Radstone, "Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the Debate," *Screen* 42, no. 2 (2001): 189.

- ¹⁶⁶ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 72.
- ¹⁶⁷ *Trauma : Explorations in Memory* (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995).
- ¹⁶⁸ Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony : Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York ; London: Routledge, 1992).
- ¹⁶⁹ Susannah Radstone, "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics," *Paragraph* 30, no. 1 (2007): 9-10.
- ¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.
- ¹⁷¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 73-4.
- ¹⁷² *In ibid.*, 74.
- ¹⁷³ Tom Toremans, "Trauma: Theory - Reading (and) Liteary Theory in the Wake of Trauma," *European Journal of English Studies* 7, no. 3 (2003): 337.
- ¹⁷⁴ Ruth Leys, *Trauma : A Genealogy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).
- ¹⁷⁵ Cathy Caruth, *Trauma : Explorations in Memory*, 152. Emphasis mine.
- ¹⁷⁶ Ruth Leys, 229-65.
- ¹⁷⁷ Susannah Radstone, "Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics," 11.
- ¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 17-20.
- ¹⁷⁹ "Trauma and Screen Studies: Opening the Debate," 191.
- ¹⁸⁰ Janet Walker, *Trauma Cinema : Documenting Incest and the Holocaust* (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2005).
- ¹⁸¹ Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema : Landscape, Trauma and Memory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). Raz Yosef, *The Politics of Loss and Trauma in Contemporary Israeli Cinema*, (New York and London: Routledge, 2012). Raya Morag, *Waltzing with Bashir : Perpetrator Trauma and Cinema* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013).
- ¹⁸² Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation : Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005). Linnie Blake, *The Wounds of Nations : Horror Cinema, Historical Trauma and National Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).
- ¹⁸³ E. Ann Kaplan, *Trauma Culture : The Politics of Terror and Loss in Media and Literature* (New Brunswick, N.J. ; London: Rutgers University Press, 2005), 36-38.
- ¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.
- ¹⁸⁵ Two of the films collected in this table, *Arirang* (Lee Doo-Young, 2003) and *Thomas Ahn Joong Keun* (Suh Se-Won, 2004) were unavailable in a format that would allow their inclusion in this study in any meaningful way.
- ¹⁸⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx : The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York ; London: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁸⁷ Bliss Cua Lim, *Translating Time : Cinema, the Fantastic, and Temporal Critique* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).

¹⁸⁸ Fredric Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter," *New Left Review*, no. 209 (1995): 86.

Notes to Chapter One

¹ All dialogue quotes are taken from the English subtitles to the CineAsia Blu-ray release of the film.

² This statement clearly calls to mind 'The Greater East Asia Co-prosperity sphere', the political doctrine which provided the justification for Japanese colonial expansion.

³ Bruce Cumings, 122.

⁴ For a summary of the events behind the 'coffee plot', see Robert Neff, "Did You Know That ...(22) the Coffee Plot," *The Korea Times: Culture* (2011), http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/culture/2013/08/317_94553.html.

⁵ Woo-keun Han, 450-1.

⁶ Ibid., 451.

⁷ Gino Raymond, "Sarkozy-De Gaulle: Recycling the Resistance Myth," *French Cultural Studies* 24, no. 1 (2013): 95.

⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁹ Alternately commonly transliterated as Kim Ku/Kim Koo and An Jung-geun respectively.

¹⁰ Charles Kraus, "Kim Gu on Reunification and War, 1948," (2015), <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/kim-gu-reunification-and-war-1948>.

¹¹ Steven Denney, "Who Are Modern Korea's 'Founding Fathers'?", *The Diplomat* (2015), <https://thediplomat.com/2015/03/who-are-modern-koreas-founding-fathers/>.

¹² Gallup Korea @GallupKoreaNews, "Twitter Post," (2015). 26th February, 6:45pm. <https://twitter.com/GallupKoreaNews/status/571139035122368513>

¹³ Bruce Cumings, 197.

¹⁴ Cultural Heritage Administration of Korea, "Baekbeom Ilji (Diary of Kim Gu), Volumes 1 and 2," http://english.cha.go.kr/english/search_plaza_new/ECulresult_Db_View.jsp?VdkVgwKey=12,12450000,11.

¹⁵ Robert Koehler, "No Banknote Would Be Complete without Dokdo," *The Marmot's Hole* (2008), <http://www.rjkoehler.com/2008/10/08/no-banknote-would-be-complete-without-dokdo/>.

¹⁶ Whilst there is an entire film devoted to depicting the life of Ahn Jung-geun, the lack of available English subtitles unfortunately ensures that I am unable to engage with the text in any great detail, beyond commenting that it is in keeping with the mythologising aspects of the texts mentioned elsewhere in this section. An is represented as noble, and with an almost absurd talent for assassination, resembling in many ways a character such as James Bond.

- ¹⁷ Andrew Salmon, "Ahn Jung-Geun: Patriot, Assassin, Hero," *The Korea Times: Issues* (2012), http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/issues/2013/11/363_106442.html.
- ¹⁸ Henry Krystal, "Trauma and Aging: A Thirty-Year Follow Up," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore ; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 86.
- ¹⁹ Nye first defined his schema of power in the book *Bound to Lead*. Joseph S. Nye, *Bound to Lead : The Changing Nature of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1990).
- ²⁰ *Soft Power : The Means to Success in World Politics*, 1st ed. (New York: PublicAffairs, 2004), 1-8.
- ²¹ Jane Song, "Moving Gyeongseong: Korean Reaction to Changes in the Urban Landscape of Colonial Seoul in the 1920s" (Tufts University, 2010), 2.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 2-3.
- ²³ *Prospectus of the Oriental Development Company*, (Tokyo: The Oriental Development Company Ltd., 1921), 1.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ²⁵ Although these scenes take place within the Japanese mainland, they are still indicative of the colonial relationship. Despite their privileged positions, Han is a military meteorologist and son of a high-ranking politician, Park is a prestigious pilot, both are still regarded as Korean subjects, a fact that account for their connection to the assassination.
- ²⁶ Eric Weiner, "Waterboarding: A Tortured History," *npr* (2007), <http://www.npr.org/2007/11/03/15886834/waterboarding-a-tortured-history>.
- ²⁷ John Barry, "A Tortured Debate," *Newsweek* (2004), <http://www.newsweek.com/tortured-debate-128593>.
- ²⁸ Walter Pincus, "Waterboarding Historically Controversial," *The Washington Post* (2006), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/10/04/AR2006100402005.html>.
- ²⁹ Mark Morris, 202.
- ³⁰ "Thousands in South Korea Protest Sending More Troops to Iraq," *USA Today* (2004), http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/iraq/2004-08-15-skorea-protests_x.htm.
- ³¹ David Edelstein, "Now Playing at Your Local Multiplex: Torture Porn," *New York Magazine* (2006), <http://nymag.com/movies/features/15622/>.
- ³² Adam Lowenstein, "Spectacle Horror and Hostel: Why 'Torture Porn' Does Not Exist," *Critical Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (2011): 50.
- ³³ As in the traditional horror film, the monster is ultimately vanquished by the protagonist in *Fighter In The Wind*. In their final battle, Kato wears a black outfit, with his black hair slicked back in a fashion that is reminiscent of a number of cinematic recreations of Dracula.
- ³⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 3.
- ³⁵ Laurie Vickroy, *Trauma and Survival in Contemporary Fiction* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2002), ix.

³⁶ Ruth Leys, 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Neil J. Smelser, "Psychological Trauma and Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander, et al. (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 2004), 44.

³⁹ Simone Gigliotti, "Unspeakable Pasts as Limit Events: The Holocaust, Genocide, and the Stolen Generations," *Australian Journal of Politics & History* 49, no. 2 (2003): 164.

⁴⁰ Neil J. Smelser, 35.

⁴¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Towards a Theory of Cultural Trauma," *ibid.*, 10.

⁴² Simone Gigliotti, 171.

⁴³ Chunghee Sarah Soh, "Japan's Responsibility toward Comfort Women Survivors," *Japan Policy Research Institute Working Papers* 77 (2001), <http://www.jpri.org/publications/workingpapers/wp77.html>.

⁴⁴ The Governments of South Korea and Japan have both claimed territorial rights over a small group of islands in the East Sea (known in Korea as Dokdo, and in Japan as Takeshima). The dispute, in essence, is over exactly what property was claimed and subsequently returned by the treaties which established and relinquished Japanese colonial control over Korea. The BBC provide an overview of the key facets of the dispute at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-19207086>

⁴⁵ Choi Yu-bin, "In 1,087th Weekly Protest, Comfort Women and Supporters Still Seeking Solution from Japan," *The Hankyoreh* (2013), http://www.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/599665.html.

⁴⁶ Hyon-hee Shin, "Seoul Faces Dilemma over 'Comfort Women' Statue in Busan," *The Korea Herald* (2017), <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20170103000764>.

⁴⁷ This is not the case in Korean documentary films. For example, Byun Young-ju has directed a celebrated trilogy of films (*The Murmuring*, 1995, *Habitual Sadness*, 1997, *My Own Breathing*, 2000) examining the lives and memories of former 'Comfort Women'.

⁴⁸ Foreign Ministers of Japan and the Republic of Korea, "Japan-South Korea Statement on 'Comfort Women'," *Wall Street Journal* (2015), <https://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2015/12/28/full-text-japan-south-korea-statement-on-comfort-women/>.

⁴⁹ Office of the High Commissioner: United Nations Commission on Human Rights, "Japan / S. Korea: "The Long Awaited Apology to 'Comfort Women' Victims Is yet to Come" – Un Rights Experts," (2016), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=17209&LangID=E>.

⁵⁰ Ankit Panda, "The 'Final and Irreversible' 2015 Japan-South Korea Comfort Women Deal Unravels," *The Diplomat* (2017), <https://thediplomat.com/2017/01/the-final-and-irreversible-2015-japan-south-korea-comfort-women-deal-unravels/>.

- ⁵¹ Hyo-won Lee, "South Korea's Star Directors Get Political for Local Hits 'Dongju' and 'Spirits' Homecoming'," *The Hollywood Reporter* (2016), <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/dongju-spirits-homecoming-south-koreas-893740>.
- ⁵² JO Entertainment, "Spirit's Homecoming Production Note," (2015), <http://joent.net/en/spirits-homecoming/?ckattempt=1>.
- ⁵³ Ruth Leys, 298.
- ⁵⁴ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 11.
- ⁵⁵ Ruth Leys, 304. It is worth noting here that Leys is highly critical of Caruth's approach for a number of reasons, including the ways in which the mimetic and anti-mimetic aspects of trauma theory intertwine themselves within her work.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 299.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 8.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 7,9.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 299.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 105.
- ⁶¹ Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience : Trauma, Narrative, and History*, 17.
- ⁶² Mark Morris, 196.
- ⁶³ *Ibid.*
- ⁶⁴ A key cinematic text in this regard would be Hou Hsiao-hsien's *A City of Sadness* (1989).
- ⁶⁵ Margaret Hillenbrand, "Trauma and the Politics of Identity: Form and Function in Fictional Narratives of the February 28th Incident," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 17, no. 2 (2005): 54-5.
- ⁶⁶ Peng Ruijin, in *ibid.*, 54.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.
- ⁶⁸ It is worth noting at this point that contemporary cinema is not the only area of South Korean culture which has recently explored the colonial period. In the introduction I discussed the flourishing of academic and historical research into the period following the democratisation of the nation, a tendency that is also visible in Korean TV Dramas (such as *Seoul 1945* (2006), *Capital Scandal* (2011) and *Bridal Mask* (2012)).
- ⁶⁹ Ruth Leys, 201.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.
- ⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

Notes to Chapter Two

- ¹ For a concise overview of the international influences upon Korea in the immediate pre-colonial period, and how Japan came to dominate upon the peninsula see Michael Edson Robinson, *Korea's Twentieth-Century Odyssey* (Honolulu,: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 13-22.

- ² For an example of the arguments regarding the extent of modernisation during Japanese colonialism, see Atul Kohli, "Where Do High Growth Political Economies Come From? The Japanese Lineage of Korea's "Developmental State"," *World Development* 22, no. 9 (1994). Stephan Haggard, David Kang, and Chung-In Moon, "Japanese Colonialism and Korean Development: A Critique," *ibid.* 25, no. 6 (1997). and Atul Kohli, "Japanese Colonialism and Korean Development: A Reply," *ibid.*
- ³ David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity : An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Cambridge, MA ; Oxford ; Victoria: Blackwell Publishing, 1990), 12-13.
- ⁴ Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air : The Experience of Modernity* (New York ; London: Penguin, 1988), 78.
- ⁵ David Frisby in David Harvey, 11.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ Peter Wagner, *Modernity : Understanding the Present* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), vii.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, x, viii.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, viii-ix.
- ¹¹ Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson, "Rethinking Colonial Korea," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge (MA) & London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 10.
- ¹² Dong Hoon Kim, 88-90.
- ¹³ For an example of how early Japanese colonial practice was influenced by the western powers, see Mark Caprio, 70-73.
- ¹⁴ Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9. See also 382 n.9-13.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.
- ¹⁷ Marshall Berman, 22. One example Berman uses to illustrate this point is drawn from Goethe's Faust, in which he shows how development entails destruction, as the construction of the new necessitates the tearing down of the old. 37-71
- ¹⁸ Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson, 10-11.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.* On p.382n.18 Shin and Robinson suggest that 'True' modernity may refer to an 'independent or discrete form of Korean modernity that was interrupted by the imposition of Japanese colonial rule'.
- ²⁰ Edward I. te Chen, "Japan: Oppressor or Modernizer?," in *Korea under Japanese Colonial Rule*, ed. Nahm. Andrew C. (Kalamazoo: Center for Korean Studies, Institute of International and Area Studies, Western Michigan University, 1973).
- ²¹ Chan Seung Park, "Japanese Rule and Colonial Dual Society in Korea," *Korea Journal* 50, no. 4 (2010): 71-83.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 83.
- ²³ David Harvey, 11-12.

- ²⁴ Marshall Berman, 68.
- ²⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Penguin Twentieth-Century Classics (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), 210.
- ²⁶ Andre Schmid, "Colonialism and the 'Korea Problem' in the Historiography of Modern Japan: A Review Article," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 59, no. 4 (2000): 963.
- ²⁷ Takashi Hatada, 125.
- ²⁸ See for example, on the family registers and the 'inconvenient system' of Korean names Mark Caprio, 160-1. And on the 'Coloured Clothes Campaign' Seok-hee Kim, "Joseon in Color: "Colored Clothes Campaign" and the "White Clothes Discourse"," *The Review of Korean Studies* 14, no. 1 (2011).
- ²⁹ Stewart Lone and Gavan McCormack, 87.
- ³⁰ Seok-hee Kim, 8, 15.
- ³¹ Frantz Fanon, 254-5.
- ³² Ibid.
- ³³ Ibid., 223.
- ³⁴ Kyoung-Lae Kang, 84.
- ³⁵ Dorthe Gert Simonsen, "Accelerating Modernity: Time-Space Compression in the Wake of the Aeroplane," *Journal of Transport History* 2, no. 6/2 (2005): 102.
- ³⁶ F.T. Marinetti, "The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," in *The Documents of 20th-Century Art: Futurist Manifestos*, ed. Umberto Apollonio (New York: Viking Press, 1973).
- ³⁷ Le Corbusier and Frederick Etchells, *Towards a New Architecture*, Reprinted and enlarged from the 1931 ed ed. (London: Architectural Press, 1987).
- ³⁸ See, for example, Stanton Macdonald-Wright's *Aeroplane Synchromy in Yellow-Orange* (1920), Tullio Crali's *Acrobazie In Cielo* (1930) and Elsie Driggs' *Aeroplane* (1928).
- ³⁹ Dorthe Gert Simonsen, 112.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 102.
- ⁴¹ David Forgacs, "Space, Rhetoric, and the Divided City in Roma Città Aperta," in *Roberto Rossellini's Rome Open City*, ed. Sidney Gottlieb (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 112-9.
- ⁴² Kang has suggested that the use of space in depicting the resistance fighters in *Modern Boy* is reminiscent of Film Noir techniques. Kyoung-Lae Kang, 71-3.
- ⁴³ Dialogue taken from the English subtitles to the Premier Entertainment Special Edition Region 3 DVD release of the film.
- ⁴⁴ Michael Robinson, "Broadcasting, Cultural Hegemony, and Colonial Modernity in Korea, 1924-1945," in *Colonial Modernity in Korea*, ed. Gi-Wook Shin and Michael Robinson (Cambridge (MA) & London: Harvard University Asia Center, 1999), 56.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 57-9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 63.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 63-4.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 63.

⁵⁰ "Screen Quota Cut Clears Way for Trade Deal with U.S.," *Chosun Ilbo* (2006),
http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2006/01/26/2006012661013.html

⁵¹ Darcy Paquet, *New Korean Cinema : Breaking the Waves*, 68-9.

⁵² Ibid., 68-70.

⁵³ Hyaewol Choi, "The 'Modern Girl' Question," in *New Women in Colonial Korea: A Sourcebook*, ed. Hyaewol Choi (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2013).

⁵⁴ Yu Kwangyol, "What Is Modern?: The Great Debate on Modern Girl, Modern Boy," *ibid.*, ed. Hyaewol Choi, 75.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 74.

⁵⁶ Songsoin, "Modern Woman: The Great Debate on Modern Girl, Modern Boy," *ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁷ Ch'oe Haksong, "A Symbol of Decadence: The Great Debate on Modern Girl, Modern Boy," *ibid.*, 79.

⁵⁸ Park Yonghui, "Characteristics of "Modern Woman" and "Modern Man" in a Bourgeoisie Society: The Great Debate on Modern Girl, Modern Boy," *ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁹ Kyoung-Lae Kang, 104-6.

⁶⁰ Mark Morris, 202.

⁶¹ This designation is itself not without controversy. Kyoung-Lae Kang, 105 n.39.

⁶² For an overview of some of the key moments in this transition, see Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity: An Introduction to Modern Societies*, ed. Stuart Hall, et al. (Malden, Massachusetts and Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

⁶³ Leo T. S. Ching, 20.

⁶⁴ For an examination of the formation of Japanese colonial policy that frequently touches on the Japanese assumption of superiority without resorting to a racist distinction, see Mark Caprio.

⁶⁵ Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire : Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans During World War II*, Asia Pacific Modern (Berkeley, Calif. ; London: University of California Press, 2011), 53-4.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 46-7.

⁶⁷ Mark Caprio, 145. 169-70

⁶⁸ Takashi Fujitani, 44-5, 52-3.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 47.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 25.

⁷¹ Ibid., 38.

- ⁷² Ibid., 50. Fujitani is here writing about a study, *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamamoto Ethnos as Nucleus*, produced in 1943. The findings of the study exemplify a fear in the authors that the Government's colonial assimilation policies were leading to an apparent weakening of the superiority of the metropolitan Japanese's position.
- ⁷³ This sign may recall, for a British audience at least, the infamous 'No Dogs, No Blacks, No Irish' sign infamously posted in a bed & breakfast window which has repeatedly reappeared as an example of tensions between some of the nation's population and its postcolonial legacy.
- ⁷⁴ Takashi Fujitani, 52.
- ⁷⁵ Ibid., 28.
- ⁷⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷⁷ This is succinctly illustrated in *Spirit's Homecoming* in a scene towards the beginning. Three Korean girls are discussing (in Korean) the Japanese soldiers entering their town, and whether or not becoming a soldier can make a Korean person Japanese. One girl reminds the group that their teacher has taught them that 'We are all Japanese now', a phrase that she repeats in Japanese.
- ⁷⁸ The use of the Korean language in *Once Upon a Time* raises a number of questions. Historical records demonstrate that such a wide usage of Korean in daily life is anachronistic due to the restrictions that would have been in force at the time. The use of almost entirely Korean dialogue, with a few conversations in Japanese for effect, makes greater sense when considered in the economic context of producing a genre film destined for a contemporary South Korean audience.

Notes to Chapter Three

- ¹ Elements of this chapter have previously been published as Jake Bevan, "'Arirang': Addressing the Nation in South and North Korea," in *Korean Screen Cultures: Interrogating Cinema, Tv, Music and Online Games*, ed. Andrew David Jackson and Colette Balmain (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Brussels, Frankfurt, New York and Wien: Peter Lang, 2016).
- ² James K. Freda, "Discourse on Han in Postcolonial Korea: Absent Suffering and Industrialist Dreams," *Jouvert: A Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1999). 11.
- ³ Jung-Soon Shim, "The Shaman and the Epic Theatre: The Nature of Han in the Korean Theatre," *New Theatre Quarterly* 20, no. 79 (2004). 216.
- ⁴ Kim Yol-kyu in *ibid.* 216
- ⁵ James K. Freda.14.
- ⁶ Ibid. 14.
- ⁷ Ibid. 21.
- ⁸ Ibid. 21.

- ⁹ Jung-Soon Shim, 217.
- ¹⁰ James K. Freda, 11.
- ¹¹ Young-woon Kim, "The Beginning of Arirang: From Gangwondo *Arirang* to *Gujo Arirang*," in *Korean Folk Song, Arirang*, ed. Dong-bok Lee, Korean Musicology Series (Seoul: National Gugak Center, 2012), 27.
- ¹² In Oh-sung Kwon, "An Overview of Arirang: Musicology Characteristic and International Analyses of *Arirang*," *ibid.*, Korea Musicology Series, 13.
- ¹³ E. Taylor Atkins, "The Dual Career of 'Arirang': The Korean Resistance Anthem That Became a Japanese Pop Hit," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 66, no. 03 (2007): 650.
- ¹⁴ Oh-sung Kwon, 13.
- ¹⁵ Youn-gap Kim, "The Origin of Arirang and Meari Its Original Form," *Korea Journal* 28, no. 7 (1988): 24-5.
- ¹⁶ E. Taylor Atkins, 651.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁸ Jong-Deok Choi, "The Palace, the City and the Past: Controversies Surrounding the Rebuilding of the Gyeongbok Palace in Seoul, 1990-2010," *Planning Perspectives* 25, no. 2 (2010): 194.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ Youn-gap Kim, 32.
- ²¹ Chung-myun Lee, *Arirang: Song of Korea* (Seoul: Easy Publishing Co., 2009), 99. As previously stated the refrain, *arirang arirang arariyo*, is believed to convey no real meaning.
- ²² *Ibid.*, 57.
- ²³ Kyung Hyun Kim, "Korean Cinema and Im Kwon-Taek: An Overview," in *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema*, ed. David E. James and Kyung Hyun Kim (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 21.
- ²⁴ Dong Hoon Kim, 80.
- ²⁵ Eungjun Min, Jinsook Joo, and Han Ju Kwak, 34-5.
- ²⁶ Jooyeon Rhee, "Arirang, and the Making of a National Narrative in South and North Korea," *Journal of Japanese and Korean Cinema* 1, no. 1 (2009).
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.
- ²⁸ A short pamphlet which summarised a film along with image stills and, in this case, the musical score for the song Arirang.
- ²⁹ Jooyeon Rhee, 28:31.
- ³⁰ Dong Hoon Kim, 82. Alternately transliterated as *pyeonsa*.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 130.
- ³² Jooyeon Rhee, 30.
- ³³ Byung-sup Ahn, "Na Un-Gyu's Film Arirang," *Korea Journal* 28, no. 7 (1988): 48.
- ³⁴ See, for example, Eungjun Min, Jinsook Joo, and Han Ju Kwak, 35.
- ³⁵ Atkins notes that even the 'widespread dissemination of this version throughout Korea seems to have stifled neither the regional varieties of

'Arirang' nor the extemporaneous composition of lyrics to fit Na's familiar melody'. E. Taylor Atkins, 652.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 654.

³⁸ Darcy Paquet, "Koreanfilm.Org 1990-1995," <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm90-95.html>.

³⁹ *New Korean Cinema : Breaking the Waves*, 33.

⁴⁰ Rob Wilson, "Korean Cinema on the Road to Globalization: Tracking Global/Local Dynamics, or Why Im Kwon-Taek Is Not Ang Lee," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 2, no. 2 (2001): 312.

⁴¹ Michael Robinson, "Contemporary Cultural Production in South Korea: Vanishing Meta-Narratives of Nation," in *New Korean Cinema*, ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 27.

⁴² Im Kwon-taek, quoted in Julian Stringer, "Sopyonje and the Inner Domain of National Culture," in *Im Kwon-Taek: The Making of a Korean National Cinema*, ed. David E. James and Kyung Hyun Kim (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 179.

⁴³ I am aware that 'traditional Korean culture' can be considered a rather nebulous term, open to a variety of different definitions. Rather than attempt to delimit exactly what might be considered to be traditional culture, I follow the lead of the Korean Culture and Information Service, a state entity, part of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in South Korea. On their official website, korea.net, they include *hanbok* (traditional clothing), food, the architectural style of traditional houses, as well as a variety of artistic practices such as *gugak* (traditional musical forms), folk dance and painting styles. My use of the term 'traditional Korean culture' in this chapter refers to the mobilization of these such features by contemporary filmmakers as indicative of pre-modern, pre-colonial elements, whose continued existence is threatened by the processes of colonisation and modernity.

⁴⁴ Conversation with Kim Hong-joon, 25th October 2012, BFI Southbank.

⁴⁵ Julian Stringer, 175.

⁴⁶ Quotations taken from the English subtitles for Taewon's Region 3 DVD release of the film.

⁴⁷ Heather Willoughby, "The Sound of Han: P'ansori, Timbre and a Korean Ethos of Pain and Suffering," *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 32 (2000): 20-21.

⁴⁸ Arirang is traditionally constructed around a call and response structure in which verses are sung individually with a communally sung refrain.

⁴⁹ Julian Stringer, 109.

⁵⁰ For a discussion of the differences between 'Art' and 'Commerical' cinema that is particularly interested in issues of duration and speed, see Song Hwee Lim, *Tsai Ming-Liang and a Cinema of Slowness* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014), 24-30.

⁵¹ E. Taylor Atkins, 646.

- ⁵² The nuances of the evocations of *han* in *Seopyeonje*, and that the concept has connotations which may be experienced differently by audiences dependent upon their class and gender positions is discussed in Julian Stringer, 171-3.
- ⁵³ The Butterfly Fund, "The Butterfly Fund," https://www.koreaverband.de/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/ComfortWomen_1000Dem_PR-from-Korea_Dec2011.pdf.
- ⁵⁴ The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan, "Global Action Day: Justice for Comfort Women!," ed. The Korean Council for the Women Drafted for Military Sexual Slavery by Japan (2011).
- ⁵⁵ Jie-ae Sohn, "Arirang Network: Ceo Message," http://www.arirang.co.kr/prroom/CEO_Message.asp?sys_lang=Eng.
- ⁵⁶ Jon Dunbar, "Arirang, Korea's Unofficial Anthem," <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleId=99813>.
- ⁵⁷ "Chosun Ilbo - China Lays Claim to 'Arirang'," http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2011/06/23/2011062301297.html.
- ⁵⁸ Jungyun Kwon, "Korean Folk Song 'Arirang' Arrives in London," <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleId=89797>.
- ⁵⁹ Ibid.
- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ See <http://www.forthenextgeneration.com/download/index.html> for copies of the advertisements and videos the organisation is responsible for, including their promotional advert for Arirang. (Accessed 16th January 2013)
- ⁶² <http://www.forthenextgeneration.com/ftng.html>
- ⁶³ "Chosun Ilbo - Japan Launches S.Korean Satellite into Orbit," http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2012/05/19/2012051900359.html.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ Jessica Seoyoung Choi, "Arirang 3 in Space," <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Sci-Tech/view?articleId=100434>.
- ⁶⁶ Andray Abrahamian, "Are the Arirang Mass Games Preparing People for a Chinese Path?," <http://38north.org/2012/08/aabrahamian081312/>.
- ⁶⁷ Image source:
[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6a/North_Korea — Pyongyang%2C Arirang %28Mass Games%29 %281027950634%29.jpg/1280px-North_Korea — Pyongyang%2C Arirang %28Mass Games%29 %281027950634%29.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/6/6a/North_Korea_-_Pyongyang%2C_Arirang_%28Mass_Games%29_%281027950634%29.jpg/1280px-North_Korea_-_Pyongyang%2C_Arirang_%28Mass_Games%29_%281027950634%29.jpg)
 (Accessed 13/10/2017)
- ⁶⁸ The tablet appears however to be a repackaged version of a cheap android tablet produced in China. John Hudson, "North Korea Has Invented the Ipad!," <http://www.theatlanticwire.com/global/2012/10/north-korea-has-invented-ipad/58373/>.

- ⁶⁹ Dave Lee, "North Korea: On the Net in World's Most Secretive Nation," North Korea: On the net in world's most secretive nation.
- ⁷⁰ Jae-un Limb, "Arirang, a Song of Joy and Sorrow in Modern Times," *Korea.net* (2012), <http://www.korea.net/NewsFocus/Culture/view?articleId=104354>.
- ⁷¹ Statements made by the director to this effect will be discussed shortly.
- ⁷² Brooks Barnes, "New Tactics Aim to Make Korean Film a Hit in the U.S.," http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/10/business/worldbusiness/10dragon.html?pagewanted=print&_r=0 (Some sources list the budget as \$70 million. It is my (unfortunately uncorroborated) understanding that the figure of \$30 million refers to the production budget whereas the larger figure includes international marketing.)
- ⁷³ Jeeyoung Shin, "Globalisation and New Korean Cinema," in *New Korean Cinema*, ed. Chi-Yun Shin and Julian Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 53.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ⁷⁵ In Korea of course, this relationship was reversed with the majority of the film featuring Korean subtitles over the English language dialogue.
- ⁷⁶ For example, the special features of the region 2 DVD release of the film includes extracts from an address by Shim to a Korean audience in which he stresses the Korean nature of the film's narrative and production.
- ⁷⁷ Hye Jean Chung argues that Shim 'publicly targeted his film toward the global market, but relied on nationalist sentiment and patriotic pride to promote it to Korean and Korean-American moviegoers, who ultimately constituted the majority of the film's audience.' Hye Jean Chung, "The Host and D-War: Complex Intersections of National Imaginings Andtransnational Aspirations," *Spectator* 29, no. 2 (2009): 52.
- ⁷⁸ Bruce Wallace, "Patriotism Rears Its Fiery Head," <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/oct/15/world/fg-deewar15>.
- ⁷⁹ Image source: <http://mjsimpson-films.blogspot.co.uk/2015/04/> (Accessed 13/10/17) The ending of the film featuring images of Shim was not included on home releases of the film.
- ⁸⁰ Shim Hyung-rae, 5000 years in the making featurette, Dragon-Wars DVD.
- ⁸¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ "Twitch - Shim Hyung-Rae Talks About '디워' ('D-War')," <http://twitchfilm.com/2005/08/shim-hyung-rae-talks-about-d-war.html>.
- ⁸⁴ Bruce Wallace.
- ⁸⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁸⁶ JinHo Lee, "Shim Hyung Rae Is Sentenced but Plans to Lodge an Appeal," <http://enewsworld.mnet.com/enews/contents.asp?idx=26631>.
- ⁸⁷ "Korea Times - Employees of Ex-Comedian Win Suit over Unpaid Wages," http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2011/12/113_101006.html.
- ⁸⁸ Lee, Jin-ho.

- ⁸⁹ Dan Fainaru, "Arirang," <http://www.screendaily.com/reviews/latest-reviews/arirang/5027493.article>.
- ⁹⁰ Quotations are taken from the subtitles of the Region 2 DVD release of *Arirang* produced by Terracotta Distribution.
- ⁹¹ Chris Howard, "Contemporary South Korean Cinema: 'National Conjunction' and 'Diversity'," in *East Asian Cinemas*, ed. Leon Hunt and Wing-Fai Leung (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 88.
- ⁹² Jonathan McCalmont, "Misery Loves Fantasy: Kim Ki-Duk's *Arirang* (2011)," http://brightlightsfilm.com/73/73kimkiduk_mccalmont.php.
- ⁹³ The first lines of dialogue in the film are "Ready? Action!" but are followed by Kim explaining that then the actors begin their roles, rendering those words as part of an exploration of the process of filmmaking, rather than the commencement of this particular film. This takes place over nine minutes into the film.
- ⁹⁴ I do not mean to suggest that Kim intended for *Arirang* (2011) to be an international success, merely that he aspires to achieve it in future.
- ⁹⁵ Jonathan McCalmont.
- ⁹⁶ A video of this is available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lp_lrbee0d8 (Accessed 28th October 2017)

Notes to Chapter Four

- ¹ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," in *The Spectralities Reader*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 2.
- ² Sigmund Freud, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton, *The Uncanny*, Penguin Classics (New York ; London: Penguin, 2003), 153.
- ³ Renée L. Bergland, *The National Uncanny : Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover, NH ; London: Dartmouth College published by University Press of New England, 1999), 11.
- ⁴ Sigmund Freud, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton, 155. Emphasis in original.
- ⁵ Renée L. Bergland, 11.
- ⁶ Sigmund Freud, David McLintock, and Hugh Haughton, 148.
- ⁷ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, 3.
- ⁸ Colin Davis, "État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms," *ibid.*, 54.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," *ibid.*, 11, 9.
- ¹¹ Colin Davis, "État Présent: Hauntology, Spectres and Phantoms," *ibid.*, 54.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, 54-5.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 53.

- ¹⁴ Ibid., 56.
- ¹⁵ Julian Wolfreys, "Preface: On Textual Haunting," *ibid.*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (London and New York), 70-71.
- ¹⁶ Aijaz Ahmad, "Reconciling Derrida: 'Spectres of Marx' and Deconstructive Politics.," *New Left Review*, no. 208 (1994).
- ¹⁷ Fredric Jameson, "Marx's Purloined Letter," *ibid.*, no. 209 (1995).
- ¹⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Ghostwriting," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995).
- ¹⁹ For an illuminating overview of some of the responses to *Spectres of Marx* in this regard, see Tom Lewis, "The Politics of 'Hauntology' in Derrida's Specters of Marx," *Rethinking Marxism* 9, no. 3 (1996).
- ²⁰ Roger Luckhurst, "The Contemporary London Gothic and the Limits of the 'Spectral Turn'," in *The Spectralities Reader*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 83.
- ²¹ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction," in *Popular Ghosts: The Haunted Spaces of Everyday Culture*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Continuum, 2010), xi.
- ²² Jacques Derrida.
- ²³ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction," xi.
- ²⁴ Jacques Derrida, xix.
- ²⁵ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," 13.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ Bliss Cua Lim.
- ²⁸ Lim's principal philosophical influence in this respect is Henri Bergson, with the assistance of Giles Deleuze, although Derridean spectrality does merit a smaller amount of attention throughout the text.
- ²⁹ Cathy Caruth, "Introduction," in *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, ed. Cathy Caruth (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995), 4-5.
- ³⁰ Renée L. Bergland, 9.
- ³¹ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," 12.
- ³² That is to say that the traumatic repetition is an exact replica of the originary traumatic incident. See Cathy Caruth, *Trauma : Explorations in Memory*, 152-3. This is but one perspective on the relationship between the traumatic event and its later recurrences. For a more in-depth discussion of this topic, see the introduction and chapter one of this thesis.
- ³³ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," 13.
- ³⁴ In *ibid.*
- ³⁵ Jacques Derrida, xvii-xviii.
- ³⁶ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Introduction: Conceptualizing Spectralities," 7.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 14.
- ³⁸ Frederic Jameson in Bliss Cua Lim, 152.

- ³⁹ Kyu Hyun Kim, "Epitaph," (2007), <http://www.koreanfilm.org/kfilm07.html#epitaph>.
- ⁴⁰ Andrew Gallix, "Hauntology: A Not-So-New Critical Manifestation," *The Guardian* (2011), <https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2011/jun/17/hauntology-critical>.
- ⁴¹ Liam Sprod, "Against All Ends: Hauntology, Aesthetics, Ontology," *3:am magazine* (2012), <http://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/against-all-ends-hauntology-aesthetics-ontology/>.
- ⁴² Michael Edson Robinson, 139.
- ⁴³ Masayo Duus, *The Japanese Conspiracy : The Oahu Sugar Strike of 1920* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1999), 12.
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 302.
- ⁴⁵ As Dr Park's death comes with the return of the dead girl from the colonial period, one could also read into this film a comment on the relationship between Park's assassination and his colonial history, something to which the film *The President's Last Bang* devotes attention.
- ⁴⁶ "Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances," <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disappearances/Pages/DisappearancesIndex.aspx>.
- ⁴⁷ Tom Gunning, "To Scan a Ghost: The Ontology of Mediated Vision," in *The Spectralities Reader*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 232.
- ⁴⁸ *In ibid.*
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁰ in Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Haunted Historiographies/ Introduction," *ibid.*, 484.
- ⁵¹ Kyoung-Lae Kang, "Kyung-Sung: Cinematic Memories of the Colonial Past in Contemporary Korea," *Camera Obscura* 30, no. 3 (2015): 50-52.
- ⁵² Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Haunted Historiographies/ Introduction," 483.
- ⁵³ Alison Peirse and Daniel Martin.
- ⁵⁴ Jinhee Choi, 124.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 125.
- ⁵⁶ *Whispering Corridors*, *Memento Mori* (Kim Tae-young, Min Kyu-dong, 1999), *Wishing Stairs* (Yun Jae-yeon, 2003), *Voice* (Choi Equan, 2005) and *A Blood Pledge* (Lee Jong-yong, 2009)
- ⁵⁷ *Death Bell* (Chang, 2008) and *Death Bell 2: Bloody Camp* (Yu Seon-dong, 2010)
- ⁵⁸ *Horror Stories* (2012), *Horror Stories 2* (2013) and *Horror Stories 3* (2016)
- ⁵⁹ Giorgio Agamben, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of Living among Spectres," in *The Spectralities Reader*, ed. Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren (New York and London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 474.
- ⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, 3.

- ⁶¹ Bliss Cua Lim, 149.
- ⁶² Ibid., 51.
- ⁶³ In *ibid.*, 82. Emphasis in original
- ⁶⁴ Ibid., 83.
- ⁶⁵ Ibid., 110.
- ⁶⁶ Korea.net, 2011, <http://koreanetblog.blogspot.co.uk/2011/08/chilled-to-bone-korean-ghosts-and-urban.html>.
- ⁶⁷ "Arang Shrine," in *Encyclopedia of Korean Folk Literature*, ed. Myung-sub Chung (Seoul: The National Folk Museum of Korea), 94.
- ⁶⁸ Ibid., 95.
- ⁶⁹ Stephanie Lai, "Sympathy for Lady Vengeance: Feminist Ghosts and Monstrous Women of Asia," *The Lifted Brow* 23 (2014).
- ⁷⁰ Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, 8.
- ⁷¹ For an extreme example of the evil in contemporary South Korean horror being coded Japanese, one need look no further than Na Hong-jin's *The Wailing* (2016) in which the Japanese interloper is revealed to be, quite literally, a demon.
- ⁷² See, for example *Whispering Corridors*, *Bunshinsaba* (Ahn Byeong-ki, 2004), *Possessed* (Lee Yong-joo, 2009), *The House of the Disappeared* and *The Wailing*.
- ⁷³ Boudewijn Walraven, "Our Shamanistic Past: The Korean Government, Shamans and Shamanism," *Copenhagen Journal of Asian Studies* 8 (1993).
- ⁷⁴ Kyong-geun Oh, "Korean Shamanism - the Religion of Women," *International Journal of Korean Humanities and Social Sciences* 2 (2016): 76.
- ⁷⁵ Sang-hun Choe, "South Koreans 'Ashamed' over Leader's Secretive Adviser," *The New York Times* (2016), https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/06/world/asia/south-koreans-ashamed-over-les-secretive-adviser.html?_r=0.
- ⁷⁶ Jinhee Choi, 124-43.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid., 124.
- ⁷⁸ Matt Hills, "Ringing the Changes: Cult Distinctions and Cultural Differences in Us Fans' Readings of Japanese Horror Cinema," in *Japanese Horror Cinema*, ed. Jay McRoy (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005).
- ⁷⁹ Bliss Cua Lim, 151.
- ⁸⁰ William Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun* (London: Vintage, [1950] 2015), 85.

Notes to Chapter Five

- ¹ Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation : Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*. and Linnie Blake.
- ² Ibid., 1-2.
- ³ Ibid., 2.

- ⁴ Adam Lowenstein, *Shocking Representation : Historical Trauma, National Cinema, and the Modern Horror Film*, 2.
- ⁵ Ibid., 13-14.
- ⁶ Walter Benjamin in *ibid.*, 15.
- ⁷ Ibid., 6.
- ⁸ Ibid., 4.
- ⁹ Sallie Baxendale, "Memories Aren't Made of This: Amnesia at the Movies," *BMJ* 329 (2004).
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 1480.
- ¹¹ American Psychiatric Association. and American Psychiatric Association. DSM-5 Task Force., *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders : Dsm-5*, 5th ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 2013).
- ¹² David Punter, *The Literature of Terror : A History of Gothic Fictions from 1765 to the Present Day*, 2nd ed. ed., 2 vols., vol. 1 (London: Longman, 1996), 1.
- ¹³ Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London: Routledge, 1995), 3.
- ¹⁴ Fred Botting, *Gothic*, New Critical Idiom (London: Routledge, 1996), 2-3.
- ¹⁵ Maggie Kilgour, 4-5.
- ¹⁶ Peter Hutchings, "Tearing Your Soul Apart: Horror's New Monsters," in *Modern Gothic: A Reader*, ed. Victoria Sage and Allan LLOYD Smith (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 89.
- ¹⁷ Fred Botting, 14.
- ¹⁸ Ibid., 13.
- ¹⁹ Katarzyna Ancuta, "Asian Gothic," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Modern Gothic*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
- ²⁰ Ibid., 212.
- ²¹ Christopher Frayling, "Foreword," in *Gothic: The Dark Heart of Film*, ed. James Bell and British Film Institute (London: BFI, 2013), 5.
- ²² Misha Kava, "2002," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, The Gothic on Screen), 209.
- ²³ Ibid., 210.
- ²⁴ Fred Botting, 14.
- ²⁵ Ian Conrich, "Gothic Bodies and the Return of the Repressed: The Korean Horror Films of Ahn Byeong-Ki," *Gothic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010). The films under discussion are *Nightmare* (2000), *Phone*, *Bunshinsaba* and *APT* (also distributed as *Apartment*, 2006)
- ²⁶ Coralline Dupuy, "'Why Don't You Remember? Are You Crazy?': Korean Gothic and Psychosis in a Tale of Two Sisters," *Irish Journal of Gothic and Horror Studies*, no. 3 (2007).
- ²⁷ Jada Yuan, "The Korean Gothic Lesbian Revenge Thriller That's Captivated Cannes," (2016), <http://www.vulture.com/2016/05/korean-lesbian-revenge-thriller-takes-cannes.html>.
- ²⁸ Fred Botting, 3.

- ²⁹ David Punter, 1, 114-39.
- ³⁰ Ibid., 138, 35.
- ³¹ Jinhee Choi, 160-1.
- ³² Fred Botting, 1.
- ³³ David Punter, 1, 138.
- ³⁴ Ibid., 15-17.
- ³⁵ Fred Botting, 4.
- ³⁶ Coralline Dupuy.
- ³⁷ David Punter, 1, 138.
- ³⁸ Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996 [1764]), 7. Walpole is here clearly invoking a biblical reference, namely Deuteronomy 5:9. 'Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.'
- ³⁹ Fred Botting, *Gothic*, 2nd edition. ed., *The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2014), 3.
- ⁴⁰ David Punter, 1, 46.
- ⁴¹ Priscilla B. Hayner, "Fifteen Truth Commissions--1974 to 1994: A Comparative Study," *Human Rights Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1994): 600.
- ⁴² Ibid., 598.
- ⁴³ Young Jo Lee, "Commissioning the Past: South Korean Efforts at Truth and Justice after Democratization," in *Transitional Justice and Beyond in South Korea, Second International Symposium* (2010), 3.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid.
- ⁴⁵ Andrew Wolman, "Looking Back While Moving Forward: The Evolution of Truth Commissions in Korea," *Asian Pacific Law & Policy Journal* 14, no. 3 (2013): 34.
- ⁴⁶ Young Jo Lee, 2.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., 8-12.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 11-12.
- ⁴⁹ Andrew Wolman, 43.
- ⁵⁰ Sheila Miyoshi Jager, "Korean Collaborators: South Korea's Truth Committees and the Forging of a New Pan-Korean Nationalism," *The Asia-Pacific Journal* 3, no. 6 (2005): 3.
- ⁵¹ Andrew Wolman, 51.
- ⁵² Ibid., 52.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Sheila Miyoshi Jager, 2. Jager Korean Collaborators
- ⁵⁵ Si-soo Park, "Pro-Japan Collaborators Wealth Confiscated," *Korea Times* (2008), http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2008/02/113_19812.html.
- ⁵⁶ "Seizing Wealth of Pro-Japanese Collaborators Ruled Constitutional," *Korea Times* (2011), http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/10/117_84250.html.

- ⁵⁷ Rahn Kim, "Government to Seize Assets of Collaborators in Colonial Era," *ibid.* (2007), http://koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2007/05/113_2202.html.
- ⁵⁸ Cheong-won Kim, "Pro-Japan Collaborators List Sparks Controversy," *ibid.* (2005), <http://international.ucla.edu/institute/article/29195>.
- ⁵⁹ Maria del Pilar Blanco and Esther Peeren, "Spectral Subjectivities: Gender, Sexuality, Race/ Introduction," 311.
- ⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, xvii-xviii.
- ¹ The Korean title for the film is simply 박열, Park Yeol, illustrating that his story already has a certain degree of cultural recognition.
- ² Like *Anarchist From Colony*, the original language title for *Man of Will*, 대장 김창수 (Commander Kim Chang-soo) uses the name of its revolutionary protagonist.
- ³ One such film, *Her Story*, a film about the efforts of a group of former comfort women to find legal retribution against the Japanese state, is already slated for release in 2018.
- ⁴ Hajimu Takeda, "S. Korean Task Force Criticizes 'Comfort Women' Deal Set in 2015," *The Asahi Shimbun* (2017), <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201712280043.html>.
- ⁵ Yuki Tatsumi, "The Japan-South Korea 'Comfort Women' Agreement Survives (Barely)" *The Diplomat* (2018), <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-japan-south-korea-comfort-women-agreement-survives-barely/>.
- ⁶ Benjamin Haas, "South Korea: Former President Park Geun-Hye Sentenced to 24 Years in Jail," *The Guardian* (2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/06/former-south-korea-president-park-geun-hye-guilty-of-corruption>.
- ⁷ "Full Text of Joint Declaration Issued at Inter-Korean Summit," *Yonhap News Agency* (2018), http://m.yna.co.kr/mob2/en/contents_en.jsp?cid=AEN20180427013900315&site=0200000000&mobile.

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Filmography

Films are listed alphabetically by their English title as referred to in the text. For films for which this title is not the original, their original language title has been included. Where useful, any other widely circulating English titles have been included also.

- 1987: When the Day Comes* (1987, Jang Joon-hwan, 2017)
- 2009: Lost Memories* (2009 로스트메모리즈, Lee Si-myung, 2002)
- Acacia* (아카시아, Park Ki-hyeong, 2003)
- The Age of Shadows* (밀정, Kim Jee-woon, 2016)
- The Anarchists* (아나키스트, Yoo Young-sik, 2000)
- Anarchist From Colony* (박열, Lee Joon-ik, 2017)
- APT* (아파트, Ahn Byeong-ki, 2006) Also released as *Apartment*
- Arang* (아랑, Ahn Sang-hoon, 2006)
- Arirang* (아리랑, Na Un-gyu, 1926)
- Arirang* (아리랑, Lee Doo-yong, 2003)
- Arirang* (아리랑, Kim Ki-duk, 2011)
- Assassination* (암살, Choi Dong-hoon, 2015)
- The Attorney* (변호인, Yang Woo-seok, 2013)
- Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (Jay Roach, 1997)
- Battleship Island* (군함도, Ryoo Seung-wan, 2017)
- Beautiful* (아름답다, Juhn Jai-hong, 2008)
- Bestseller* (베스트셀러, Lee Jung-ho, 2010)
- A Blood Pledge* (여고괴담 5: 동반자살, Lee Jong-yong, 2009)
- Blue Sky* (창공으로, Lee In-soo, 2006)
- Blue Swallow* (청연, Yoon Jong-chan, 2005)
- Breath* (숨, Kim Ki-duk, 2007)
- Bunshinsaba* (분신사바, Ahn Byeong-ki, 2004) Also known as *Witch Board*
- Chaw* (차우, Shin Jung-won, 2009)
- Chihwaseon* (취화선, Im Kwon-taek 2002) Also known as *Painted Fire, Strokes of Fire and Drunk on Women and Poetry*
- Chunhyang* (춘향뎐, Im Kwon-taek, 2000)

Citizen Kane (Orson Welles, 1941)
A City Of Sadness (悲情城市, Hou Hsiao-hsien, 1989)
Crocodile (악어, Kim Ki-duk, 1996)
D-War (디워, Shim Hyung-rae, 2008) Also released as *Dragon Wars: D-War*
Dachimawa Lee (다찌마와 리: 악인이여 지옥행 급행열차를 타라, Ryoo Seung-wan, 2008)
Death Bell (고死: 피의 중간고사, Chang, 2008)
Death Bell 2: Bloody Camp (고死 두번째 이야기 : 교생실습, Yoo Sun-dong, 2010)
The Doll Master (인형사, Jeong Yong-ki, 2004)
Dongju: The Portrait of a Poet (동주, Lee Joon-ik, 2016)
Dracula (Todd Browning, 1931)
Dream (비몽, Kim Ki-duk, 2008)
Enlightenment Film (계몽영화, Park Dong-hoon, 2010)
Epitaph (기담, Jung Brothers, 2007)
Fighter In The Wind (바람의 파이터, Yang Yun-ho, 2004)
Frankenstein (J. Searle Dawley, 1910)
Gabi (가비, Chang Youn-hyun, 2012) Also known as *Russian Coffee*
The Ghost (령, Kim Tae-kyung, 2004) Also known as *Dead Friend*
The Good, The Bad, The Weird (좋은 놈, 나쁜 놈, 이상한 놈, Kim Jee-woon, 2008)
Le Grand Chef (식객, Jeon Yun-su, 2007)
Haan, Han Gil Soo (한길수, Lee In-soo, 2005)
Habitual Sadness (낮은 목소리 2, Byun Young-ju, 1997)
Hanbando (한반도, Kang Woo-suk, 2006)
The Handmaiden (아가씨, Park Chan-wook, 2016)
Horror Stories (무서운 이야기, Im Dae-woong, Jung Bum-sik, Hong Ji-young, Kim Gok, Kim Sun, Min Kyu-dong, 2012)
Horror Stories 2 (무서운 이야기 2, Min Kyu-dong, Kim Sung-ho, Kim Hwi, Jung Bum-sik, 2013)
Horror Stories 3 (무서운 이야기 3, Baek Seung-Bin, Kim Sun, Kim Gok, Min Kyu-Dong, 2016)
The Host (괴물, Bong Joon-ho, 2006)
Hostel (Eli Roth, 2005)

- The House of the Disappeared* (시간위의 집, Lim Dae-woong, 2017)
- The Housemaid* (하녀, Kim Ki-young, 1960)
- In the Land of Morning Calm* (Im Lande der Morgenstille, Norbert Webber, 1925)
- Joint Security Area* (공동경비구역 JSA, Park Chan-wook, 2000)
- Ju-on: The Grudge* (呪怨, Takashi Shimizu, 2002)
- Kairo* (回路, Kiyoshi Kurosawa, 2001) Also known as *Pulse*
- Killer Toon* (더 웹툰 : 예고살인, Kim Yong-gun, 2013)
- The King and The Clown* (왕의 남자 Lee Joon-ik, 2005)
- Man of Will* (대장 김창수, Lee Won-tae, 2017)
- Masquerade* (광해, Choi Chang-min, 2012)
- Memento Mori* (여고괴담 두번째 이야기, Kim Tae-young and Min Kyu-dong, 1999)
- Modern Boy* (모던 보이, Jung Ji-woo, 2008)
- The Mummy* (Stephen Sommers, 1999)
- The Murmuring* (낮은 목소리 - 아시아에서 여성으로 산다는 것, Byun Young-ju, 1995)
- My Own Breathing* (낮은 목소리 3 : 숨결, Byun Young-ju, 2000)
- My Way* (마이 웨이, Kang Je-gyu, 2011)
- Nightmare* (가위, Ahn Byeong-ki, 2000)
- Nosferatu* (*Nosferatu, eine Symphonie des Grauens*, F.W. Murnau, 1922) or *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror*
- Ode To My Father* (국제시장, Yoon Je-kyoon, 2014)
- Once Upon a Time* (원스 어폰 어 타임, Jeong Yon-ki, 2008)
- Ordinary Person* (보통사람, Kim Bong-ham, 2017)
- The Phantom of the Opera* (Carl Laemmle, 1925)
- Phone* (폰, Ahn Byeong-ki, 2002)
- Possessed* (불신지옥, Lee Yong-joo, 2009) Also known as *Living Death*
- Private Eye* (그림자 살인, Park Dae-min, 2009)
- Radio Dayz* (라디오 데이즈, Ha Ki-ho, 2008)
- Rashomon* (羅生門, Akira Kurosawa, 1950)
- The Red Shoes* (분홍신, Kim Yong-gyun, 2005)
- Rikidozan: A Hero Extraordinary* (역도산, Song Hae-sung, 2004)
- Ring* (リング, Hideo Nakata, 1998)

Roaring Currents (명량, Kim Han-min, 2014) Also released as *The Admiral*:

Roaring Currents

Rome Open City (*Roma Città Aperta*, Roberto Rossellini, 1945)

Rough Cut (영화는 영화다, Jang Hoon, 2008)

Saving Private Ryan (Steven Spielberg, 1998)

Seopyeonje (서편제, Im Kwon-taek, 1993)

Shiri (쉬리, Kang Je-gyu, 1999)

The Silenced (경성학교: 사라진 소녀, Lee Hae-young, 2015)

Silmido (실미도, Kang woo-suk, 2003)

Spirit's Homecoming (귀향, Cho Jung-rae, 2016)

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